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DHULANGATE EKKE PAKE AAM

(Literary Sketches On Common Life)

VILLAGE PANCHAYATS
IN
INDIA

by

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सत्यमेव जयते

FOREWORD

My young colleague, Harsh Dev Malaviya, has already written with distinction on complicated subjects. His book on the land problem in India is probably the best summary of present conditions in this country and of what has been done and what remains to be done.

He has now undertaken the writing of a book on Village Panchayats in India. I have only read one or two chapters of this book, but I have been impressed by them. He has not confined himself to describing the old Indian Village Panchayats, but has spread out his net wider and included similar developments in other countries. In the result, his book tends to become a story of the development of early civilisations, with special reference, of course, to India.

This is a fascinating subject. In our entanglement with the problems of today, we are apt to forget what happened in the past. And yet, it is this past out of which we have grown and which has conditioned us. Therefore, the study of the past is not only interesting in itself, but is helpful in understanding the present.

I hope that this book will have a wide audience.

Jawaharlal Nehru

New Delhi,
15th February, 1956.

INTRODUCTION

IN viewing the problem of Village Panchayats in India, as indeed all our problems, we have to keep before us the outlook of integrated human growth and development. It is a signal contribution of our country's heritage that only that growth survives and that developmental activity has a lasting value in which the process envelops all the aspects of human existence and works from within. This has given our leadership a perspective of an integrated development of human personality. In this process, the individual citizen has to be provided with opportunities to evolve himself through his own selected mediums in the social, economic and political fields. In a vast country like India, it would be impossible for the State to fulfil this function, and hence the emphasis on village society and economy and Village Panchayat wherein the individual, while fulfilling his duty to his country, can also have an opportunity to evolve himself. Village has been the base of our society and its economy, and Village Panchayat has been its medium through long centuries. Similarly, the process of social integration can be attained and its progress enhanced only if it is simultaneously accompanied by a process of emotional integration. Actually, emotional integration expedites the process of social and psychological integration.

It is because these basic approaches have always been present in the minds of Indian social thinkers from ancient times that we have been able to maintain the fabric of India's cultural integrity and polity, and that too despite many a blasting hurricane. The British attempted a cultural conquest of the country as had never been done before, and as a part of this attempt they destroyed our Village Panchayat system.

It is, therefore, necessary to reorientate our minds. The Village Panchayat is not merely a decentralised form of administration. It is a medium through which we want the Indian people in the rural areas to express themselves on the administrative, social and economic problems of the country and evolve an integrated Indian community through a process of emotional integration. It is not only that we want every citizen of the country in the rural areas to actively associate himself with the governance of the country through Village Panchayats, but we want to provide him with an opportunity to express himself through this system, and help him in the process to develop himself into an integrated citizen of an integrated State.

This is the basic approach. The soul of democracy is not merely mechanical rule of a numerical temporary majority. But it is the medium for transmitting a sense of participation in the process of evolution of Indian Society, the governance of the country and in the development thereof. It is this feeling which can be the hard rock on which the structure of democracy will find a solid base. So long as that 'feel' is missing, whatever the quantum of physical participation of the people on the side of the administration or development work, the experiments in democracy will not take roots.

It is in this context that we have to read the Article in our Constitution declaring that the village will be the unit of democratic society in India. The question is how to implement this Directive Principle in the Constitution. We cannot afford to forget the conditions prevailing at present in the rural areas. At one time our rural areas were not only the bed-rock of our political stability and a source of our economic strength but also provided the initiative for our social and cultural growth. It was only during British Rule, and that too because of the neglect and apathy of those on whom depended the destiny of the country, our villagers were reduced to the state of more or less hewers of wood and drawers of water. Neglect of our village by the rulers was only one part of the story. Neglect by the indigenous intelligentsia completed it. Have a look at any Indian village and one vividly notices three glaring deficiencies: (1) absence of intelligentsia; (2) absence of amenities; (3) absence of initiative. And because of this, the basic source from which we draw our wealth and our strength is reduced to a position of secondary importance. There are still people in the urban areas who look upon a rural existence with scorn and disdain. These three deficiencies have produced among the rural population a sense of utter dependence and defeatism.

The Government and the society are, therefore, called upon, as a matter of duty, to provide a corrective not only in the administrative field but also on the psychological and emotional plane. If, on the contrary, we merely approach the problem superficially, we will be introducing in the rural community the deleterious features which may deepen the crisis. Introduction of elements that militate against that existence will generate conflicts in the very basis of its existence.

We should not forget that inter-dependence is the key-note of life in the villages. Any scheme that we evolve must work for and not against the essential need for a co-operative existence.

We are required to develop in the villager a conscious bond of loyalty towards the principle of democracy. Having deprived him of education, having deprived him of contact with the intelligentsia, having tied him to a colonial economy, the Britishers expected the villager to give his loyalty to the British Crown. We have seen the result. Democracy can enthuse him only if we can secure for him (1) original status as the bread-winner of the country, (2) a purposeful existence, and (3) self-sufficiency in place of a dependent economy. Once he gets these, the villager will come back to his old self in no time.

The form of Panchayat organisation that was considered essential within a feudal framework would not be suitable now. Mere abolition of Zamindari system does not mean the end of feudal thinking. The structure of Village Panchayat and the picture of Panchayat programme, therefore, will have to be different from the frame-work of the programme in olden days. The old leadership in the village, ignorant of the fundamental change that is taking place in the relationship between man and man in India today, will linger on for some time. The new leadership that is required cannot, however, be created in a minute. It is, indeed, a whole process. This evolution must be brought about in a manner which would eliminate friction and strain, and yet we should see that the process does not result in entrenching the forces of reaction. How are we to avoid this contingency happening? In my opinion, it would be necessary to deal with the existing leadership in the village psychologically. It can be done only by a qualified body of persons who understand villages, who could with sympathy bring about the transformation. It means supplementing the leadership of the village. To expect this role from the District Boards of today would be assuming too much. There must be a sort of non-official-cum-official agency whereby the resources of the State and of the village, as also the experience of all, can be pooled together in the service of the people. I must hasten to make it clear that there should be no thought of interfering with the local initiative. It is a question of assistance and guidance to the Panchayats with a view not to control but to convert.

This brings us to the question of the authority of the Panchayats. If the full impact of the changes is to be felt by the villages, there should be no stinting either on the side of transfer of functions or on the side of resources. The two major blows inflicted by the British Government on the Village Panchayat organisation were taking away from them their revenue and judicial functions. We have now to reverse the process and undo the grievous wrong. There will have to be a constant endeavour in order to convince the people of the village that what is being transferred to them is not merely a shadow of power or jurisdiction but is real, genuine authority.

We aim at an integrated development. In other words, such transfer of authority must result in toning up the entire social life of the village. The genuine growth of Village Panchayat in any village must mean an end to the drink evil, insanitary conditions, illiteracy and all other evils which breed social perversities. The list can, indeed, be fairly long. It is through these efforts that the rural dweller will learn the lessons in purity of mind, heart and life.

The toning up of the social life of the village is just one part of the programme. The other is the need for economic development of the village and the community. We have launched in India a great experiment in Community Projects and National Extension Service.

In this context I would refer to the mechanism of elections also. No person believing in democracy can say that elections are not essential. But the basic fact should not be overlooked that no experiment can be successful if it does not simultaneously assure a homogeneous group of people behind it.

The vote should not be allowed to divide the people. Political parties with their rigid mental inhibitions cannot operate without bypassing this basic need for social integration in the background and injuring the process of community existence at any rate in the present state of things. I would, therefore, unhesitatingly say that elections on party basis would be the worst service that we can render to the people in the villages. I would go to the extent of asking for a constitutional prohibition of such elections. Not only that, I would unhesitatingly say that the Western pattern of the elections will destroy all chances of securing integration. We must evolve a method by which we may know the minds of the people without risking the principle of harmony. Our fancy for the British model of elections is costing us heavily even at the District Boards and Municipal levels. While elections are essential for assessing the wishes of the people, the important thing is how to ascertain the wishes of the people and not the particular method. I would, therefore, plead for an original approach to this question of ascertaining the wishes of the people. If we emphasise the maintenance of unity in the village, we can still find in every village a few individuals in whom the village community is prepared to repose its confidence. What is needed is a personnel which understand the minds of the people in the village and the prevailing currents and not merely satisfy the mechanical mathematics of election laws.

Simultaneously, we are working for doing away with social and economic injustice in reforms in the land system; the abolition of the feudal system; the fixation of a ceiling upon land-holdings; reduction of rents and protection of tiller of the soil; all these are a part of the great change that has come over India. But the process must continue. Landlordism is going, but the vast masses of our village folk are cultivating uneconomic holdings; the condition of our agricultural labourers has hardly undergone any change; inequality and social injustice still are the rule rather than the exception. The Village Panchayats can grow and can become the medium for the achievement of a Socialistic Pattern of Society in terms of the Avadi Congress Resolution only when the State intensifies the great efforts it has already made to provide for the removal of social injustices by legislation. Social equality in fact is the *sine qua non* for the successful carrying through of our great experiment of Village Panchayats.

All that breaths with life has a delicate side. That on which the life itself depends requires the most delicate handling. If Village Panchayat is to fulfil its function of being the base of our socio-political structure, it requires the utmost care. To the extent it fulfils its mission, to that extent we will be strong and prosperous.

Shri Harsh Dev Malaviya is an esteemed friend and has to his credit already so much of research work on political and economic questions. The present is one more work of that type. But I nevertheless feel that nothing that comes from his studies or pen can be second-rate. His is the approach of a devotee and for months past he has been labouring on this subject with the devotion of a dedicated spirit. His concern and anxiety to provide material on the subject to the public in general and those who are furthering the destinies of the people is reflected in the work. It is a comprehensive study of the ancient institutions, the vicissitudes through which it has passed and the way in which it is developing in the post-Independence period. He places before the people the various problems connected with the rural administration and gives suggestions based upon the experience gained in the past and the recent years. It will not be tall claim for this book if I say that it will be soundly considered to be the authority on the subject.

New Delhi, U. N. DHEBAR
May 15, 1956.

PREFACE

THE Directive Principles of the Constitution of India lay down in clear terms that it would be the duty of the State to organise Village Panchayats as basic units of local self-government. The Congress Working Committee also drew the attention of the country to the vital importance of Village Panchayats in India and appointed the Village Panchayat Committee to study this question in detail and make concrete suggestions for organising Village Panchayats throughout the country on a sound basis. The report of the Congress Village Panchayat Committee was welcomed by the public in general and most of the State Governments have already taken several steps to implement the recommendations of the Committee.

It was suggested that the Economic and Political Research Department of the AICC should publish a book on the subject and work out the recommendations of the Congress Village Panchayat Committee in greater detail. I am, indeed, happy that Shri H. D. Malaviya, Secretary of our Economic and Political Research Department, has found time to study this question thoroughly in all its aspects. In the course of this book Shri Malaviya has explained fully the historical and ideological background of the Gram Panchayats in this country from times immemorial. He has also explained at length how the Village Panchayats in this ancient country developed into a sound system of democracy in accordance with our indigenous traditions and cultures. It must be realised by all of us that these Village Panchayats are not the relics of tribalism or feudalism but are the result of mature political thinking through the ages. Recent trends in the West also indicate that the system of decentralised democracy is regarded as more conducive to the development of human personality as well as the progress of the society. Even authoritarian countries like Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union are finding it necessary to decentralise their administration. This study of Village Panchayats in India, therefore, is bound to be very useful in focussing world attention on the urgent need for evolving a political system in which there will be devolution of economic and political power on the local institutions and communities.

There is, however, one point which requires serious re-thinking. It has been recently pointed out by Acharya Vinobaji and others that the Village Panchayats in India would really succeed in bringing about decentralisation of economic and political power only if we take early steps to create conditions for greater social and economic equality in our countryside. Village Panchayats in a society which is still dominated by various types of vested interests may become instruments of oppression rather than agencies for quick social and economic reforms. This is an aspect of the problem which requires deep study and discussion. I am, however, of the view that while every attempt should be made to establish Village Panchayats in the country speedily, we should invest these Panchayats with greater powers in accordance with the progress they make in social and economic equalities in their areas. For example, we could have two or three categories of Panchayats. Substantial powers should be given to only Class I Panchayats which have brought about redistribution of land established co-operatives, and have dissolved local factions and groups through more or less unanimous elections and decisions. Other categories should be invested with lesser powers pertaining to sanitation, health and other municipal affairs.

I earnestly hope that the publication, "Village Panchayats in India," will stimulate further thought on this important subject and help the process of decentralisation of democracy not only in India but in other countries as well.

I congratulate Shri Malaviya on his deep study and research on Village Panchayats and I do hope that this publication will be welcomed and appreciated by all those who are vitally interested in the development of democracy in India on sound and healthy lines.

SHRIMAN NARAYAN

New Delhi,
June 18, 1956.

PROEM

MY young friend, Shri Harsh Dev Malaviya, recently served with me as a member of some Committees of the Panel of Land Reforms under the Planning Commission. And so we worked together on intimate terms in the course of our tours through different parts of India. He then discussed with me the lines on which he was preparing a comprehensive work on the institutions of village self-government in their historical background and the lines on which they should be revived. I have known him to be singularly qualified by his study and erudition to handle such a difficult and complex topic which is so vital for building up the new India as a Welfare State. He was good enough to make references to my own works on different aspects of ancient India, and I felt flattered that he was very well posted with my writings on the subject he had chosen. I have no hesitation in stating that he has done full justice to the historical setting of his subject and to the working of the various types of rural institutions under village communities of ancient times which had practically functioned for centuries as live republics, as testified to by Sir Thomas Munro in the evidence he gave before a Select Committee of the House of Commons in 1834. He has grasped the main principle of this ancient Indian rural development, namely, the differentiation of functions as between State and Society as different entities operating within specified limits.

The work of Shri H. D. Malaviya is most appropriate to the needs of the times when there is a wide-spread and keen recognition of the fundamental fact that free India cannot be fully built up as a Republic unless its working is felt in all the strata of society from top to bottom, and especially in the foundation of Indian social structure in the village where should grow the roots of self-government. Democracy must be a consistent structure of which any section taken anywhere should exhibit the same features of self-government. And, indeed, if I may go a little further, the more backward an area or a community, the greater is its need of self-government as the most potent force of its uplift. It is liberty alone that fits a people for liberty, and good government is no substitute for self-government. In the British system rural India was denied the blessings and benefits of self-government on the ground that it was not fit for them. It was forgotten that their fitness would come out of the exercises in self-government so as to develop in them the social tissues which sustain civic life.

Shri Malaviya has brought to his difficult task a rare equipment, study and research by which he has been able to produce after long painstaking investigations a most comprehensive and scientific work, which would rank as an original contribution and a work of reference for all those who will be concerned not merely with the study but also the working of various rural institutions under our revived Panchayat System. I am confident, Shri Malaviya's study will have a permanent place in our socio-political literature.

In conclusion, I wish to state that this young author has quietly acquired his intellectual equipment in the solitude and serenity of a small study serving as his workshop where I have seen with my own eyes how he was slaving in a room packed with material for which there was hardly any accommodation. It is "Pursuit of Knowledge under Difficulties." His labours have been lightened by his cultured wife as a helpmate in his work.

New Delhi,
June 3, 1956.

RADHA KUMUD MOOKERJI

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BOOK ONE

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Except for Chapter I, the book has been written and printed in nine months and a quarter between Oct. 7, 1955, and July 15, 1956, out of which nearly two months were devoted to writing for and production of the Amritsar Session Special Number of the *A.I.C.C. Economic Review* (pp. 304) and *Arthik Sameeksha* (pp. 296), the *Report of the Congress Small Savings Committee* (pp. 205) and the author's study of *Insurance Business in India* (pp. 77). The author's routine responsibilities as Secretary of the Economic and Political Research Department and Editor of the A.I.C.C. journals, of course, continued. The work of collecting references from the huge mass of literature collected, of collating them, and all other types of related activities were performed by the author. The author's health was none too good. His forthcoming visit to China as member of Government of India's Agrarian Co-operative Delegation necessitated quick despatch of the writing and publication of the study. The author has sincerely attempted to make up the handicaps by personal labour and humble effort, and for months past he has never slept before 2-30 A.M. The limitations of such efforts are obvious and the author is deeply conscious of their consequent poverty, as also the lack of discipline in his effort. It will not be surprising, therefore, if the work is found abounding in defects. It is presented to the reader in all humility. The author will plead for the readers' sympathy and indulgence.

BOOK ONE

HISTORICAL

"The past is ever with us and all that we are and that we have comes from the past. We are its products and we live immersed in it. Not to understand it and feel it as something living within us is not to understand the present. To combine it with the present and extend it to the future, to break from it where it cannot be so united, to make of all this the pulsating and vibrating material for thought and action—that is life."

—Jawaharlal Nehru

CHAPTER I

VILLAGE COMMUNITIES IN EARLY HUMAN SOCIETY

> *"Since the advent of civilisation, the outgrowth of property has been so immense, its forms so diversified, its uses so expanding, its management so intelligent in the interest of its owners, that it has become, on the part of the people, an unmanageable power. The human mind stands bewildered in the presence of its own creation. The time will come, nevertheless, when human intelligence will rise to the mastery over property, and define the relations of the state to the property it protects, as well as the obligations and limits of the rights of its owners. The interests of society are paramount to individual interests, and the two must be brought into just and harmonious relations. A mere property career is not the final destination of mankind, if progress is to be the law of the future as it has been of the past. The time which has passed away since civilisation began is but a fragment of the past duration of man's existence; and but a fragment of the ages yet to come. The dissolution of society bids fair to become the termination of a career of which property is the end and aim; because such a career contains the elements of self-destruction. Democracy in government, brotherhood in society, equality in rights and privileges, and universal education foreshadow the next higher plane of society to which experience, intelligence and knowledge are steadily tending. It will be a revival in a higher form, of the liberty, equality and fraternity of the ancient gentes."*[1]
>
> —*LEWIS H. MORGAN*

VILLAGE communities with communal functions and ownership are the most common forms of early human society, at the stage when mankind emerges from barbarism to civilisation, and are to be traced in the early history of every nation. And even in the earlier stages of evolution, the pre-historic creatures who developed into men lived communally. This collective, communal living, in fact, ensured their constant evolution into higher stages of existence and social organisation.

Archaeologists can tell us a good deal about the early days of human history, but they cannot go back to the very beginning. The story of anthropologists, however, begins in the very early days of human history. History, indeed, is one connected whole and no one can understand the history of his own country without knowing what happened in other parts of the world. Mankind, after all, is one vast brotherhood, and despite the differences apparently visible within the society of each nation, and between one nation and another, what is more important is that man has a common origin and mankind has a common destiny. Nehru has said in his *Glimpses of World History*[1]: "A study of history should teach us how the world has slowly but surely progressed, how the first simple animals gave place to more complicated and advanced animals, how last of all came the master animal—Man, and how by force of his intellect he triumphed over the others. Man's growth from barbarism to civilisation is supposed to be the theme of history."

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[1] Ancient Society, or Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery, through Barbarism to Civilisation.

It is none of our purpose here to trace the history of this long and tortuous transition—from animal to man in the savage stage, and thence to barbarism and civilisation. Great intellects have been and are working upon the subject and what their labours have yielded can at best be described as a bare skeleton of the story, which yet bristles with numerous gaps and wherein innumerable details remain unknown. Researches by Morgan in the latter half of the 19th century, as also the works of some German and other scholars have, however, established that kinship organisations designated by animal names in Red Indian tribes of America[2] are essentially identical with the *genea* of the Greeks and the *gentes* of the Romans, and that the American is the original form and the Greek and Roman forms are later and derivative. The researches of Bancroft *(The Native Races of the Pacific States of North America)* and of Westermarck *(History of Human Marriage)* in the last quarter of the 19th century established the existence of exactly identical social relationships among widely separated people all over the globe. The Iroquois Indians of North America had a fully elaborated system of consanguinity through which several hundred relationships of one individual could be expressed. This same system is to be found among the Gaura Tribes of India and in the south, especially in the Tamil areas. Morgan said that our Tamilians and the Iroquois Indians in New York State still express more than 200 degrees of consanguinity in the same manner. And the same system was found in certain parts of Hawaii Islands. Exactly identical customs of periodic feasts of complete abandon and wild revelry have been traced among

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[1] Jawaharlal Nehru : Glimpses of World History; IIIrd Edition, Oct. 1945, Lindsay Drummond, London; p. 6.

[2] The tribes in the Western Hemisphere, whose natural growth was superseded by European conquests, had advanced to what has been called 'the middle stage of barbarism', whereunder they had learnt cultivation, by means of irrigation, of plants for food and had learnt the use of *adobe* (sun-dried) bricks and stone for building.

American Indians of the Californian peninsula, the tribes in Africa, and the Santhals and some other Backward Classes in India. And identical forms of behaviour and social customs and relationships have been traced among the people who inhabited Australia before its conquest by the White Man.

Common Origins Of Mankind

The generality of identical behaviour could not obviously be explained by calling it mere coincidence. It became obvious that mankind had common origins. There comes a stage when land masses in our globe break away, vast oceans come to separate them. Convincing proof of this has been placed before us by the geologists. As geological science advanced, scholars were amazed to find similarity in the structure and composition of rocks of the Deccan Plateau in India and the vast regions on the other side of the Indian Ocean, such as Australia, Antarctia, South Africa and even South America. Now the Deccan Plateau, with the exception of its coastal fringes, has been recognised as a chip of the oldest block of the earth, probably formed when the planet was just developing its solid skin to cover its hot molten interior, nearly one and a half billion years ago. One of the most striking similarities between the Deccan Plateau and Australia, Antarctica, etc., is a rock formed in all of them during the upper carboniferous times, when they were in the grip of an intense cold and were covered with extensive sheets of ice and glaciers.

Attempts to explain the existence of this common rock in these widely separated regions as being due to the existence of identical physical and climatic conditions were never accepted. In the earlier part of the twentieth century, the scientist Wegener postulated that all these regions together formed a vast continent in the Southern Hemisphere and he gave it the name Pangaea. The Deccan was part of it. Pangaea suffered from a very cold spell and rivers of ice flowing over it formed the special kind of rock called the glaciated boulderbed. Sometimes after this, and before the climate had become congenial, Pangaea suffered from severe strains as a result of which cracks developed. These cracks widened and developed into ruptures. And thus comes the stage when land masses in our globe break away, vast oceans come to separate them and continents come into existence.

Other parts of the globe underwent similar transformation. As Dr. R. C. Majumdar has remarked : "The greater part of this process of evolution, which must have covered a long period of time, is only a matter of inference based on very slender evidence. The study of this fascinating subject has made some progress in Europe, while so far as India is concerned, it is still in its infancy. But the little that is known shows that the pre-historic period in India presents features very similar to what we meet with in Western Asia and Europe. Here, as elsewhere, 'man's pre-history merges in the pageant of the animal world,' and is largely determined by his natural surroundings."[1] Prof. V. Gordon Childe has said :[2] "At the beginning of the pleistocene a great deal of East Anglia was under the sea. The so-called crags of Norfolk are sediments laid down in the shallow sea that covered the country at that time. Gradually the accumulation of such silts, coupled with equally gradual upheavals of the earth's crust, joined Britain to the Continent ultimately made dry land of the North Sea basin. The Thames then joined the Rhine as a tributary and flowed out over a vast plain into the Arctic Ocean north of the Dogger Bank. The re-submergence of this area had not been completed when the ice-sheets disappeared. A land-bridge to England may have still existed when the pleistocene period ended, and the sinking that destroyed it is still in progress. Its progress is no more perceptible today than in the earlier stages and in the previous stages of elevation. That again should emphasise the stupendous period of the pleistocene."

Man appears very late in the geological record. No fossil skeleton thus far discovered is attributed to any period earlier than that of the pleistocene, and they are indeed very rare. Today all men belong to one species, *Homo sapiens,* but the earlier pleistocene "men" belong to several distinct species and their bodily structure diverges so widely from the mankind of today that anthropologists are inclined to assign them to a distinct genera. As Prof. Childe remarks :[3] "In the pedigree of *Homo sapiens* they represent side-branches from the main stem....but for the moment the distinctions may be ignored."

It was long period between the time when the first living cell floated on the waters of the sea and the end of the million-year-old world empire of reptiles, after which came their descendants, who were quite unlike the reptiles, who fed their young from the "mammae" or the breasts of the mothers. These animals, "mammals" as science calls them, developed other habits which gave their race a great advantage over the other animals. And, as

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[1] The Bharatiya Itihas Samiti's History and Culture of the Indian People, Vol. I., The Vedic Age, George Allen and Unwin Ltd. London, Second Impression 1952, p. 82.

[2] Man Makes Himself, A Mentor Book, New York, 1951; p. 41.

[3] Ibid, p. 26.

Hendrik Van Loom has remarked[1]: "One mammal in particular seemed to surpass all others in its ability to find food and shelter. It has learned to use its fore-feet for the purpose of holding its prey, and by dint of practice it had developed a hand-like claw. After innumerable attempts it has learned how to balance the whole of the body upon the hind legs....This creature, half ape and half monkey but superior to both, became the most successful hunter and could make a living in every clime. For greater safety, it usually moved about in groups. It learned how to make strange grunts to warn its young of approaching danger and after many hundreds of thousands of years it began to use these throaty noises for the purpose of talking."

This creature was the 'manlike' ancestor of modern mankind. Of course, this conception of human evolution is very different from the Adam-and-Eve story, or that of our Hindu mythology whereunder a lotus grew from the body of God Vishnu, as he was resting in the *Kshir Sagar* (Ocean) with his wife Lakshmi, over which came the Almighty Brahma, who then created the *Srishti* (the Universe). These, and other religious beliefs apart, on the evidence available today, the balance of probability favours this view of the evolution of man, who was the last to come but the first to use his brain for the purpose of conquering the forces of nature.

Man's Journey Through Identical Stages

Pre-history, so to say, may be regarded as constituting a bridge between human history and certain natural sciences such as geology, paleontology, etc. What we seek to suggest is that just as this our earth underwent identical transformations geologically, so also was the fate of the creature who finally came to possess that rare commodity—the brain. From an impersonal scientific standpoint, history justifies a belief in progress even when we come across what may appear a period of depression. Prof. V. Gordon Childe has said:[2] "The changes on which archaeologists are wont to insist do correspond to changes in forces of production, in economic structure and social organisation....Archaeology can and does trace out radical changes in human economy, in the social system of production....In their effect upon humanity as a whole some prehistoric changes at least are comparable to that dramatic transformation which is familiarly known as the Industrial Revolution of eighteenth century Britain."

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[1] The Story of Mankind, Pocket Books, New York, 1953: p. 8.

[2] Op. cit., pp. 14-15.

Indeed, as time advances, and as man's knowledge is further enriched by new researches in and discoveries of the ages past, so also is furnished greater and greater proof of man's progress in various climes and tracts of the world through identical stages. During the Ice Ages several species of men already existed. They hunted the beasts and drew pictures of them in the caves. Archaeologists have divided the cultures of the past into Stone Ages—Palaeolithic and Neolithic (old and new), Bronze Age and Iron Age, on the basis of material generally and by preference employed for cutting implements. Of the human family in the earliest stages of development, scientists have hitherto traced the Java Man *(Pithecanthropus)*, the Peking Man (*Sinathropus pekinensis)*, the Heidelberg Man *(Homo heidelbergensis)*.

The Role Of *Shrama* (Labour) In Man's Transformation

Recent excavations and researches at the "Dragon Bone Hill," in Choukoutien near Peking, throw a flood of new light on the habits of this species[1], the Ape Man as he is called. Scientific researches have established that Peking Man, having lived between 4,00,000 and 5,00,000 years ago, is one of the earliest human beings, only the Java Man may be older. Excavations were first carried out during the decade 1927-1937, when many fossils were recovered, including four complete skulls, jaws, teeth, etc. In all, it was estimated, these finds represented over sixty individuals of both sexes and different ages. The work at Choukoutien, interrupted on account of political conditions in 1937, was re-started in 1949 under the direction of the Laboratory of Vertebrate Palaeontology of the Academia Sinica. Up-to-date, with the fossils of the Peking Man, large numbers of stone artifacts and bone tools which he used were discovered, revealing traces of crude human skill applied in making them. Scorched animal bones and stones showed that Peking Man had learnt the use of fire. The abundant fossils of horses, cattle, deer and other animals suggest the existence of rich pasture land. The fossils of leopards, tigers, bears, rhineceros and elephants suggest the existence of considerable forests.

Basing himself on the researches of Prof. Wu Ju-kang and Mr. Chia Lan-po, both anthropologists of the Laboratory, Pei Wen-Chung has given some very interesting conclusions and shows the role of labour in the transformation of these early creatures into men. To quote him : "In very early times, when part of the vast forests of the earth vanished owing to climatic changes, one branch of the ancient apes which had previously lived in these forests, was forced to come down to the ground to find sustenance. Conditions on the ground were far harder than those in the forests, where the apes could pick fruit from the trees at any time. It was now necessary for them to dig up wild plants, catch small animals and struggle constantly for food. The apes had to use their fore-limbs more than they had done in the past. Through work, their hands became more dextrous until at last they became so specialised for the purpose of obtaining food, making tools, etc., that they were no longer used for walking. When the ape began to stand erect on his hind-limbs, a decisive step was taken in his development into man."

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[1] "New Light on Peking Man", article by Pei Wen-Chung in China Reconstructs (bi-monthly published from Shanghai) of July-August 1954.

These new findings emphasise two aspects of the ancient man which specially deserve our attention. One, that even in this earliest stage, man was a social animal, in so far as within his own community he co-operated with each other; their groups lived together and acted collectively, which, in other words, means they did have some sort of collective *Panchayat* function. Two, that the ape man emerged as such because of *shrama,* that is labour. Hand was not only the organ of *shrama* but was in itself the product of *shrama.*

From Savagery To Barbarism

We will not prolong this discussion further, fascinating and absorbing though it is. Man journeys from savagery to barbarism. In the first stage of savagery he lived in tropical forests and on trees to save himself from wild beasts. He ate fruits and roots and is supposed to have developed articulate speech at this stage. In the second stage of savagery he learns the use of fire, begins to utilise fish for food, and migrations begin along rivers and coasts. The first weapons are found (flint tools of the "palaeolithic" age), and hunting is resorted to. If caught in areas where neither fruits nor roots or hunt were available, cannibalism developed among the tribes. In the final stage of savagery they learn the use of bow and arrow and make sharper stone tools (the "neolithic" age). With this, some beginnings are made towards settlement in villages.

And now, with the introduction of pottery, the transition to barbarism commences. The characteristic feature of the first stage of barbarism is that man learns to domesticate and breed animals and the cultivation of plants. The Western Hemisphere, however, lacked animals which could be domesticated and we find that their development is left far behind the onward march in the Eastern Hemisphere. The Aryan and Semitic races developed the formation of cattle herds of considerable size, and this particular trait separated them from the barbarians. Says Will Durant in his *Story of Civilisation*[1] :

> "To live by hunting was not original; if man had confined himself to that, he would have been just another carnivore. He began to be human when out of the uncertain hunt he developed the greater security and continuity of the pastoral life. For this involved advantages of high importance : the domestication of animals, the breeding of cattle, and the use of milk......The animal continued to be eaten but not so soon; it acted as a beast of burden, but it was accepted almost democratically into the society of man; it became his comrade and formed with him a community of labour and residence. The miracle of reproduction was brought under control and two captives were multiplied into a herd."

Domestication Of Animals: The Break From Barbarism: Agriculture

This knowledge of the domestication of animals and control of herds inevitably led to further advance of those early men who had taken to pastoral life and separated from the barbarians. This meant not only milk and milk products and more meat but also skins, wool, goat-hair, etc. The production and possession of these things by different tribes in ever-increasing quantities provide the basis of exchange between goods. Better and ampler diet resulted in the development of the physique and mental faculties of the Aryan and the Semitic races. As Will Durant has remarked : "Population increased, life became more stable and orderly, and the mastery of that timid parvenu, man, became more secure on this earth."[2]

The domestication and control of animal herds imply the existence of pastures, grassy plains and rivers. It was about this stage when man made the most revolutionary discovery ever—production of food from land. History will never succeed in solving the mystery of man's discovery of the function of the seed, the discovery of the bounteous soil. Will Durant gives the credit to woman, who, while man hunted, grubbed about the tent or hut for whatever edible things lay ready to her hand on the ground. Howsoever it be, even in its simplest form, knowledge of agriculture brings important changes in the people and their ways of living together. Once having learnt to grow food, man could also increase its supply. The same area could now support a larger number of people and population increased. And because more food is available, people can afford to take time to practise other skills, relying on exchange with their neighbours to eke out their food supply. It was in farming communities that complicated skills, like weaving and metal working, were finally developed. The cultivating communities lived in more settled villages than the hunting communities, though, it is true, after exhausting the soil at one place they moved on to other areas.

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[1] Will Durant : The Story of Civilisation: Our Oriental Heritage; Simon and Schuster, New York, 1942.

[2] Ibid, p. 8.

One epoch-making improvement which revolutionised the entire life of this new farming society was the harnessing of cattle to the plough. It was a direct result of the domestication of animals and knowledge of farming by the same community. Once animal power was put to agricultural use, the yield of crops of a given field was increased and the man-hours needed to work it were reduced. It was as a result of this discovery that people could be freed for travelling and commerce and great cities could grow up, fed by the countryside.

The Three Transitional Stages

This was the stage when mankind enters what has come to be called the period of civilised history. The saying that Arrian puts into the mouth of Alexander is indeed significant[1]: "My father led you down from the mountains to the plains, when you lived in scattered places, he made you dwellers in cities, and he equipped you with institutions adopted to your changed mode of life."

In short, the march of mankind may be summed up as follows : First, the state of savagery when man predominantly lives on products in their natural state, and for appropriating these natural products he prepares the simplest and crudest instruments; second, the state of barbarism when domestication of animals commences, man learns the art of farming and thus human efforts become capable of increasing natural products; and, finally, civilisation when man's mastery over nature increases, industries and arts develop, classes become dominant and their conflicts dominate the march of history. As the Russian thinker and author of the nineteenth century, N. G. Chernyshevsky (1828-1889), has said, these transitions were due to "three immense improvements in human life : the acquisition of the art of using fire and of maintaining or kindling it; the domestication of animals; the discovery of the art of tilling the soil for the purpose of growing cereals." [2]

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[1] Quoted by J. S. Reid in **The Municipalities of the Roman Empire**.

[2] N. G. Chernyshevsky : **Selected Philosophical Essays**, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1953; essay on "Scientific Conception of World History", p. 277.

Reflecting on this progress of human life, Chernyshevsky remarks : "We have two categories of forces that promote improvement in human life. One of them is a man's striving fully to satisfy the needs of his organism and his desire to acquire knowledge irrespective of its practical utility, solely because he finds pleasure in doing so; the other is the human relationships that arise from mutual goodwill." [1] We would specially emphasise this aspect of 'mutual goodwill.' This mutual co-operation and collective effort, as we have pointed out above, seems to have existed even among Peking Men. This apart, it is obvious that mutual aid could find better play when man crossed the nomadic, hunting existence and settled in agricultural villages.

Mutual Aid: Society Without State

Village communities thus become the earliest forms of human social organisation where mutual goodwill and co-operation reigns supreme till such time as subsequent historical-economic developments burst them asunder and disrupt them. The *Report of the Congress Village Panchayat Committee* has said : [2] "This institution of local self-government and village communities was also practised in different countries of Europe and Asia. The Greek City States in Europe enjoyed direct local autonomy. For the Greeks, the City was a 'life in common.' The City State 'was at once a Parliament and a Government, an Executive, Legislature and Judiciary in one.' [3] A good account of the co-operative life practised in village communities in Europe is given by Prince Kropotkin in his well-known book, *Mutual Aid.* China and Japan have also been some of the oldest homes of such decentralised rural institutions."

Prince Petr Kropotkin's work deserves the greatest attention of all interested in the development of the Village Panchayat institution in India. It is a masterly study of the origin and development of co-operative function among living beings, with special reference to European history. Says the Prince : "....But whatever the opinions as to the first origin of the mutual-aid feeling or instinct may be—whether a biological or a supernatural cause is ascribed to it—we must trace its existence as far back as to the lowest stages of the animal world; and from these stages we can follow its uninterrupted evolution, in opposition to a number of contrary agencies, through all degrees of human development, up to the present times."[1]

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[1] Ibid, p. 274.

[2] Report of the Congress Village Panchayat Committee, All India Congress Committee, New Delhi, 1954; p. 9.

[3] Quoted from The Democratic Process by Lord Bryce, pp. 249-50.

Kropotkin's conclusions may be thus summarised: At the very dawn of the stone age men lived in clans and tribes; among the clans and tribes of the lower savage stage a wide series of social institutions developed; the earliest tribal customs and habits gave to mankind the embryo of all the institutions which made later on the leading aspects of future progress; and out of the savage tribe grew up the barbarian village community. Such a community, "a society without a State," still existed among the Indian tribes of America when it was first dominated by the White Man. Morgan conducted a thorough study of the Iroquois Indians and the results of his work are found in his great work, *Ancient Society*. Engels, in his work *Origin of the Family*, has thus summarised Morgan's findings[2]: "A wonderful constitution in all its childlike simplicity. No soldiers, no gendarmes, no police, no nobles, kings, regents, prefects or judges, no prisons, no lawsuits—and everything takes its orderly course. All quarrels and disputes are settled by the whole of the community affected."

The Greek City States

The earliest example of such a society known to us with its vivid details are the Greek City States. The Greeks were "free citizens of a hundred independent little 'cities,' the largest of which counted fewer inhabitants than a large modern village. His fatherland was the holy soil where his father and mother lay buried and the small house within the high city-walls where his wife and children lived in safety. It was a complete world which covered no more than four or five acres of rocky land."[3] Maine has said[4]: "In most of the Greek States, and in Rome there long remained the vestiges of an ascending series of groups out of which the State was at first constituted. The Family, House and Tribe....may be taken as the type of them, and they are so described to us that we can scarcely help conceiving them as a system of concentric circles which have gradually expanded from the same point. The elementary group is the Family connected by common subjection to the highest male ascendant. The aggregation of families forms the Gens or House. The aggregation of Houses makes the Tribe."

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[1] Prince Petr Kropotkin: **Mutual Aid**; Pelican Books, 1939: pp. 233-234.

[2] F. Engels: **Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State**, Burmon Publishing House, Calcutta; p. 117.

[3] **The Story of Mankind**, Op. cit., p. 54.

[4] Henry Sumner Maine: **Ancient Law: Its connection with the Early History of Society, and its Relation to Modern Ideas**, VIIth Edition, London John Murray, 1878; p. 128.

The Greeks were a small tribe of shepherds on the banks of the river Danube who wandered southwards in search of fresh pastures. They called themselves Hellenes, after Hellen, the son of Deucalion and Pyrrha. These wandering shepherds killed the inhabitants of the Greek peninsula who were called Pelasgians, lived for sometime as quiet neighbours of the farming colonies of the Aegeans and learnt from them better farming methods, the use of iron weapons, the mysteries of navigation, and then turned upon their teachers, enslaved them and drove away the rest. And then they created the City States. In all matters of government, the Greek democracy recognised only one class of citizens—the free men. Every City State had its large army of slaves who out-numbered the free citizens at the rate of six or five to one. These slaves were the cooks, the bakers, the tailors, carpenters and jewellers, the school-teachers and the book-keepers and had no say in the government. In these little city republics with the city in the centre and some fields round about from which the food of the city came, the freemen debated and voted upon all public questions. They thus were the Parliament, the Government, the Judiciary and the Executive, all in one. They reached a high state of culture and art and even when they fanned out to Southern Italy and Sicily, they formed their separate City State, refusing to join them to form a large state, kingdom or republic.

The Russian *Mirs*

Another very important and ancient system of village communities existed in Russia in the last century. World attention was drawn to village structure in Russia when serfdom was abolished there in 1862. Maine was at this very time busy in his searching studies of ancient society and his work *Ancient Law* refers to the researches[1] of M. de Haxthausen and M. Tengoborski. These scholars proved that "Russian villages are not fortuitous assemblages of men, nor are they unions founded on contract: they are naturally organised communities like those of India." Maine remarks that "the tokens of an extreme antiquity are discernible in almost every single feature of Indian village communities," and says : "In the assumption of an agnatic connection between the villagers, in the blending of personal rights with privileges of ownership, and in a variety of spontaneous provisions for internal administration, the Russian village appears to be a nearly exact repetition of the Indian Community." Shri Jawaharlal Nehru has also remarked: "The old Russian *Mir* might be comparable in some way to the Indian village community."[1]

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[1] Op. cit.; p. 266.

The Russian *Mir,* indeed, affords one of the most remarkable instances of common property in land, so characteristic of old village society in India. The family group consisted of the descendants of a single ancestor. In his valuable work on land tenures of different countries, C. D. Field, a Bengal British Civilian in the seventies and eighties of the last century, gives an account of these *Mirs.*[2] They came into existence when the early agricultural communities settled in villages and had of necessity to combine against the onslaughts of people and tribes and races yet in the nomadic stage. Russian village or Commune, not the family or the individual, became the "constitutional unit" of the Russian nation. The land belonged to the Commune, and the individual, by virtue of being a member of the village community, and consequently of the Commune, had merely the usufruct, the right to the temporary enjoyment of a share. The Commune was responsible for the payment of all Government dues. "This community of rights and liabilities, the members of this political unit, the land which belonged to them collectively—this little world and its inhabitants—were called the *Mir.*"[3]

The *Mir* was originally an association of free men, and this Russian *Mir* retained its liberty till the 16th century. And, strange as it may appear, their later reduction into serfs, and after 1862 to the status of more or less tenants-at-will, followed a course similar in India under the British, with the difference, however, that whereas in India, with the creation of zamindaris and other parasitic tenures by the British, the village communal function was destroyed, in Russia, even under the harsh exploitation of the nobles and the landed gentry, the Communes continued to act collectively for the payment of the land dues, apportioning the share of each inhabitant and collecting it. The Czar became the father of the Russian *muzhik,* but the latter was never his slave or serf. Slaves, however, were there as a result of fortunes of war and the Czar's chiefs received these captives as gifts. Outside the limits of the *Mir,* all unoccupied land became the Czar's property. And "as the number of those whom it was necessary to reward for serving the Czar increased, while the unassigned and vacant crown lands diminished, a new form of grant came into use, whereby the grantee received an assignment of the taxes payable to the Czar by one or more villages or *Mirs*."

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[1] The Discovery of India, First Edition, March 1946, The Signet Press, Calcutta; p. 289.

[2] C. D. Field : Landholdings and the Relation of Landlord and Tenant in Various Countries, Thacker Spink & Co., Calcutta, 1883, pp. 165-168.

[3] *Mir* also means 'the world', 'the universe'.

Note the similarity between this Czarist assignment and the assignments of revenue-farming by the British in India to those who remained loyal to the foreign conquerors. Both in Russia and India, it was a grant merely of the right to collect and appropriate the Government revenue. And, as Field has remarked in relation to Russian *Mirs* : "But what was *revenue* when paid to the State, became *rent* when paid to a private individual, and the right to receive the rent gradually drew after it the proprietorship." It was Peter the Great who made the landed proprietors responsible for the collection of tax, and they in their turn laid the duty of collecting it upon the Commune, the *Mir*. The Commune maintained a register of its male souls and divided the lord's demand among the peasantry, who accepted the decision of the *Mir* as an unalterable decree.

The Southern Slav *Zadruga*: In Germany And France

Indeed, this system of village brotherhood was found by scholars towards the end of the nineteenth century to be very common among the Slav people. Maine says that "in Serbia, in Croatia and the Austrian Slavonia, the villages are brotherhoods of persons who are at once co-owners and kinsmen."[1] Referring to the researches of Maxim Kovalevsky, Engels says that the *zadruga* (which may be roughly translated as "bond of friendship") or *bratstvo* (brotherhood) among the Southern Slavs, the Serbs and the Bulgars, are family communities who "cultivate their fields in common, feed and clothe themselves from a common stock and possess in common the surplus from their labour." The community was under the supreme direction of the *domacin,* that is, the head of the house, who is elected, it being not at all necessary for him to be the oldest in the community. And, "supreme power rests with the family council, the assembly of all the adult members of the household, women as well as men. To this assembly the master of the house renders account; it takes all important decisions, exercises jurisdiction over the members, decides on sales and purchases of any importance, especially of land."[2]

Existence of such co-operative economic units has been traced among the Germans by Heusler, among the Celts in Ireland it was the mode of living,[1] and they survived in certain parts of France under the name *parconneries* till the time of the French Revolution. In Algeria it survived among the Kabyles. As we have said earlier, Kropotkin has given vivid details about these ancient institutions in his memorable work, of course, with special reference to Europe. Before we turn to the Old World, the East, it would be proper to summarise the findings. In the words of Kropotkin :[2] "The village community was not only a union for guaranteeing to each his fair share in the common land, but also a union for common culture, for mutual support in all possible forms, for protection from violence, and for a further development of knowledge, national bonds, and moral conceptions, and every change in the judicial, military, educational, or economical manners had to be decided at the folkmotes of the village, the tribe, or the confederation. The community being a continuation of the gens, it inherited all its functions."

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[1] **Ancient Law, Op. cit.; p. 268.**

[2] **Origin of the Family, Op. cit., pp. 66-67.**

The Monogolian *Bratskiye*

Moving eastwards, across European and Asiatic Russia, we come across the Mongol races, and the existence of community life among them was so widespread and deep-rooted that even the Russians, in spite of their *Mirs,* were stupefied when they first came in touch with them. Kropotkin has recorded that even after the Russian conquest of Siberia, the village communities of the Mongol Buryates, especially those of the Kudinsk Steppe on the Upper Lena, were found living in joint households. The joint family worked in common in their fields and jointly owned their cattle. Says Kropotkin :[3] "Altogether, the Russian conquerors of Siberia were so much struck by the communistic practices of the Buryates, that they gave them the name of *Bratskiye*—'the Brotherly Ones'—and reported to Moscow : 'With them everything is in common, whatever they have is shared in common'."

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[1] C. D. Field, describing the land tenures in Germany, refers to the "rural political communes, governed by a common council, the members of which are elected," in the Dutchy of Hesse. Government selected the burgomaster from among the members of the common council. "He exercises civil function, and with the aid of two or more assessors, members of the commune, constitutes a local civil court of limited jurisdiction....It is at the same time a private corporation and a public body, constituting the administrative unit of the circle." (Op. cit., p. 82).

Referring to Irish Tenures, Field says : "There can be no reasonable doubt that in Ireland, as in other countries, the earliest form of property in land was that of joint ownership by a community, each member of which was entitled only to the usufruct of the plots allotted to him at the annual or periodical partition. Dr. Sullivan, indeed, maintains that all the essential features of the Germanic land system are to be discovered in an earlier stage of development amongst the Celtic race." (Op. cit., p. 239).

[2] Mutual Aid, Op. cit.; p. 110.

[3] Ibid, p. 119.

Village Communities In Ancient China

And now we would briefly deal with the system of village communities in the ancient land of China. Scholars and historians the world over have paid rich tributes to Chinese culture and civilisation. Toynbee says : [1] "If we consider the genesis of the Sinic civilisation in the lower valley of the Yellow River, we shall find a human response to a challenge from physical nature which was perhaps even more severe than the challenge of the Two Rivers [2] and of the Nile." Count Keyserling concludes that "altogether the most perfect type of humanity as a normal phenomenon has been elaborated in ancient China....China has created the highest universal culture of being hitherto known....How perfect the courtesy of the cultured Chinaman....China's supremacy of form is unquestionable in all circumstances....The Chinaman is perhaps the profoundest of all men." [3] Nehru says that "Chinese people are the most courteous and perfect-mannered and cultured in the world." [4] "I think that a country with a long cultural background and a common outlook on life develops a spirit that is peculiar to it and that is impressed on all its children, however much they may differ among themselves. Can anyone fail to see this in China, whether he meets an old-fashioned mandarin or a Communist who has apparently broken with the past." [5] And Lin Yutang has rightly remarked : "The family system and the village system, which is the family raised to a higher exponent, account for all there is to explain in the Chinese social life." [6]

In a brilliant essay entitled "Contrasting Factors in the Modernisation of China and Japan," Marion C. Levy, an American scholar, says : [7] "The economic structure of 'traditional' China was one in which the townsmen were supported by goods and services from both the towns and the villages, but the villagers were supported almost entirely by what they produced. The village economy was the key-stone of the whole economy, but as far as most of the villagers were concerned the flow of good and services was a one-way affair." Levy later remarks that most of the patterns he is referring to as 'traditional' have a pedigree of nearly 2,000 years. And he remarks: "The (village) system, when relatively devoid of graft and corruption, was probably as effective and well-balanced a system of organising and controlling a large-scale, highly decentralised system as the world has ever seen." Elsewhere in the same essay, Levy says: "The family in 'traditional' China....was also the basic unit in terms of which the economic aspects of life were carried out....was self-sufficient in production and consumption to a degree that it is difficult for persons from highly industrialised societies to understand. They produced most of what they consumed, and consumed most of what they produced."[1]

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[1] **A Study of History** by Toynbee, Abridgement of Vols. I to VI by D. C. Somervell Oxford University Press, London, 1946; p. 74.

[2] Reference is to Tigris and Euphrates and the Sumeric Civilisation.

[3] Quoted by Will Durant in **The Story of Civilisation**, Op. cit., p. 639.

[4] **Glimpses of World History**, Op. cit., p. 35.

[5] **The Discovery of India**, Op. cit., p. 53.

[6] **My Country and My People** by Lin Yutang, William Heinemann Ltd., London, 1936; p. 167.

[7] **Economic Development and Cultural Charge**, Vol. II, No. 3, October 1953, published by the University of Chicago, pp. 172-173.

Describing the foundations of Chinese society, the late M. N. Roy has given[2] more details of the *Tsing Tien* (pre-confucian, that is, before 6th century B.C.) system of land-holding. It was a consanguine organisation binding nine families of the same clan into a productive unit. Roy says that in the earlier part of the Chou regime (11th—3rd century B.C.), a territory of about a million square kilo-meters was divided among 1,800 principalities which were tribal organisations like those found in Greece. "The social pyramid was as follows: Five family groups made a *kei,* ten *keis* made a *li,* four *lis* made a *leh,* and four *lehs* made a *siang.* The structure bears a striking similarity to the tribal organisation in ancient Greece which was: thirty families made a *gen,* thirty *gens* formed a *phartry,* and three *phartries* composed a tribe."

It is to China that the world owes the famous dictum: *That Government governs best which governs least.* And the Chinese people, in their long history, living in their village communities, governed themselves. In the old imperial days, the central authority had very little to do with village governance, and a common folk saying was: *The heaven was high and the emperor far away.* As Lin Yutang has remarked:[3] "The real government of China may be described as a village socialism." The village government had as its chief organs a council of elders or managers and a headman, the latter usually termed the *ti pao.* This council consisted of the leaders of the more important families of the village and of experienced people in the village, the village scholars, etc., who were high in public esteem. No formal elections were held, but "membership appears rather to have come through tacit recognition by public opinion."[1] The elders so selected had to be confirmed by the responsible magistrate, usually the *Chih hsien.*

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[1] Ibid, p. 165.

[2] Revolution and Counter-Revolution in China by M. N. Roy, Renaissance Publishers, Calcutta, 1946, p. 26.

[3] My Country and My People, Op. cit., p 195.

Latourette has given the following interesting list of functions which the council of elders and the *ti pao* performed in the village: lighting the streets, maintaining the watchman, building and repairing dykes, constructing and maintaining the wall (if there was one), supervising markets, approving of all transfers of land, erecting and repairing temples, sinking and cleaning community wells, collecting the taxes and contributions levied by the State, and adjusting disputes between fellow villagers or with other villages.

The remarkable similarity between these functions and those assigned to our own Village Panchayats in India today under the various State Panchayat legislations would not pass the reader unnoticed. We would specially draw attention to the last function mentioned above, the judicial function, as it may be called. Lin Yutang says :[2] "As regards law and justice, the people always fought shy of the law court, ninety-five per cent of village disputes being settled by the village elders. To be involved in a law suit was *ipso facto* ignominious."

The Mediaeval Guilds: Feudalism And Village Communities

Our study, therefore, leads to the conclusion that in ancient times, the village communities, with communal functions and ownership, existed all over. Their subsequent destiny, however, would not be found to be so identical. Clear distinctions would be found in the later stages of these communities, both with regard to their functions, as also ownership over the cultivated lands, but we cannot go into the question here. A reference may, however, be made to the guilds of olden times, which were, in fact, "in the very same current of mutual aid and support which we saw at work in the village community."[3] Actually these guilds were a direct product of man's experience in the village communes put to application with the diversity of man's occupations, his knowledge of crafts and arts, and growing commerce with distant lands. In India, where the institution of Village Panchayats was "developed earliest and preserved longest among all the countries of the earth,"[4] *Shreni* was a well-known name for merchant guilds, and they continued in varied forms until a few centuries ago. In the conditions of Europe, however, the growth of petty feudatories in the period of emergence from barbarism to civilisation resulted in a diminution in powers and usurpation of various rights of the village community.

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[1] **The Chinese : Their History and Culture by Kenneth S. Latourette, The Macmillan** Company, New York, 1948, IInd revised edition; p. 534.

[2] **Op. cit.,** p. 194.

[3] **Prince Kropotkin : Mutual Aid, Op. cit., p. 136.**

[4] **R. C. Dutta : The Economic History of India**: quoted by **Report of the Congress Village Panchayat Committee**; Op. cit., p. 9.

Feudalism did not imply dissolution of the village community. The lord succeeded in imposing servile labour upon the peasants. He also appropriated such rights as were formerly vested in the community, e.g., taxes, mortmain, duties on inheritances and marriages, etc. These communities nevertheless continued to retain common ownership of land and self-jurisdiction, which, as Kropotkin says, at that time meant "self-administration and self-legislation." These rights were defended by the people with tenacity. Villages were fortified, market places were defended against the lord, pitched battles were fought, and the movement assumed considerable proportions. This movement led to the creation in Europe, in the 11th and 12th centuries, of the famous mediaeval guilds in the free cities, as against the rest of the villages, which could not succeed in resisting the lord and became his serfs. These became the *"oases amidst the feudal forest."* In Russia these existed in the name of *druzhestva, minne, artels,* in Serbia and Turkey they were called *esnaifs* and in Georgia *amkari.* They represented a form of voluntary union based on brotherhood, mutual help and common rights. This union helped them to finally succeed in getting the mediaeval kings to recognise the freedom of the cities, and it is here that a prosperous merchant class developed, which was later to play such a decisive role in world history.

The Development Of Exchange : Money Economy

These city guilds, and later the merchant class, grew as a result of the growth of exchange among the ancient village communities. This exchange itself became possible when man, through his labour and better skill, produced a surplus so that people taking to other skills and crafts could eke out their living by exchanging their products for food—the system of barter. In the initial stages, in the self-sufficient economies, this practice was limited, but, as Van Der Post says :[1] "There is sufficient evidence that exchange played an important role among the ancients, as, for example, the biblical account of Jacob sending his sons to Egypt to purchase grain." Will Durant also says :[2] "Trade was the great disturber of the ancient world, for until it came, bringing money and profit in its wake, there was no property."

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[1] **Economics of Agriculture** by A. P. Van Der Post, Central News Agency Ltd., South Africa, 1937; p. 20.

[2] **The Story of Civilisation**; Op. cit., p. 16.

The exchange of commodities, in the initial stage, takes place when one community, or members of one community, come in contact with another community or members thereof. And once exchange commences in the external relations of a community, the process, by reaction, sets inside the internal intercourse of one community. The proportion in which the exchange takes place first is a matter of chance, depending upon the mutual desire of the owners to alienate them and the use which each wants to make of the product of the other. And as exchange develops, a commodity comes into contact not with one commodity, but with a number of commodities. Gradually, a variety of commodities enter into such exchange relationships. The need arises for a value-form and the commodity most common in demand assumes that form. In hunting commodities, for example, the cattle became such a form. In the economy of the Vedic Aryans, as we shall presently see, the cow assumes this expanded form. This was only natural at that time. The only kind of wealth these ancient communities could count was wealth in cattle. Landowning did not then mean wealth, for ample was available and anyone could go out and use as much land as he wanted.

Thus cattle acquired a money function and were already doing the work of money. Marx has expressed the idea in the following words : [1]. . . ."The bodily form of this commodity becomes the form of the socially recognised universal equivalent. . . .Thus it becomes money. Money is a crystal formed of necessity in the course of the exchanges, whereby different products of labour are practically equated to one another and thus by practice converted into commodities."

Enslavement Of Human Labour Power

The development of exchange implied division of labour in the society. The first great social division of labour seems to have taken place when the pastoral tribes separated themselves out from the barbarians. These pastoral tribes further differentiate and conditions ripen for exchange between the products of different tribes. Man's initial knowledge of cattle grazing and agriculture is followed by domestic handicrafts—the loom as also smelting of metal ores. The development of exchange leads to the creation of the mediaeval city and the new merchant class, and with their development came the metallic coin, the minted money.

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[1] Karl Marx : Capital, Vol. I, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1954: p. 86.

This new development, which in itself matured after centuries of human growth and experience, was the result of a new relationship in society and this, in its turn, profoundly influenced all subsequent developments, and the village communities could not but be affected by it. By itself possessed of no magical powers, money, a creation of man himself, came to be regarded by him as possessed of unlimited power over things. Money acquired power over things even in unorganised exchange economy, and in later stages of human history it became supreme and all-powerful. As mankind knew more crafts and vocations, it became possible to have an ever-increasing number of people to work them. And thus comes the stage when human labour power is enslaved. Human labour power is enslaved only when it produces considerable surplus over its cost of maintenance.

Destruction Of Village Communities: Emergence Of The State

Tracing the developments leading to the preponderance of money economy. Nehru says:[1] "The savage, hunting alone, gradually forms a family, and whole household works together and for each other. Many households co-operate together to form the village, and workers and merchants and artisans of different villages later join together to form guilds of craftsmen. Gradually you see the social unit growing....Why did this social unit grow? It was the struggle for a living that forced growth and co-operation, for co-operation in defence against the common enemy and in attack was obviously far more effective than single-handed defence or attack. Even more so was co-operation in work helpful....which meant that an economic unit was also growing....Indeed, it was probably this growth of the economic unit, ever pushed on by man's struggle for a living, that resulted in the growth of society and of the social unit....Life becomes more and more complicated as these economic and social units grow. Commerce and trade increase. Barter takes the place of gift, and then money comes and makes a tremendous difference to all transactions. Immediately trade goes ahead, for payment by gold or silver coin makes an exchange easy."

In short, through agriculture and slavery, through the division of labour and diversity of occupations, the equality of early village communities is replaced by inequality and class divisions. Product as it is of man's reciprocal activity, society undergoes transformation in accordance with changes in productive forces. Productive forces themselves are a result of practical human effort, but once one particular force comes into play, it acts and reacts on society. From the connection between changing methods of production arises a connection in the history of human beings.With a change in the method of production sets in a change in human relationships and its most obvious resultant is property. And "inheritance added superior opportunity to superior possessions, and stratified the once homogeneous societies into a maze of classes and castes. Rich and poor became disruptively conscious of wealth and poverty; the class war began to run as a red thread through all history; and the state arose as an indispensable instrument for the regulation of classes, the protection of property, the waging of war, and the organisation of peace." [1]

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[1] Glimpses of World History, Op. cit.; p. 89.

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[1] The Story of Civilisation, Op. cit., p. 20.

CHAPTER II

AGRICULTURE AND VILLAGE COMMUNITIES IN ANCIENT INDIA[1]

> *"Real socialism has been handed down to us by our ancestors who taught 'All land belongs to* Gopal. *Where then is the boundary line? Man is the maker of that line and he can, therefore, unmake it.* Gopal *literally means shepherd; it also means* God. *In modern language it means the* State, *i.e., the* people."
>
> —*MAHATMA GANDHI*
> *(Harijan 2. 1. '37)*

> *"May the* Samiti *and the* Sabha, *the two daughters of* Prajapati *concurrently aid me. May he with whom I shall meet, co-operate with me; may I, O Ye Fathers, speak agreeably to those assembled.*
>
> *"We know thy name, O Assembly :* Narishta *verily is thy name. May all those that sit assembled in thee utter speech in harmony with me.*
>
> *"Of them that are sitting together I take to myself the power and the understanding in this entire gathering, O Indra, render me successful."* [2]
>
> —*ATHARVA-VEDA*

THE ancient Indian peasant was, above all, a sturdy, robust, self-confident fellow with lot of common sense about him and well-versed in the art of agriculture. In Pali *Suttanipat* a peasant thus challenges Indra, the Rain-God :

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[1] All English renderings of original Sanskrit texts quoted in the footnotes, unless otherwise mentioned, have been done by the author. These renderings seek to convey the general sense and should not be regarded as literal

[2] सभा च मा समितिश्चावतां प्रजापतेर्दुहितरौ संविदाने ।
येना संगच्छा उप मा स शिक्षाच्चारु वदानि पितरः संगतेषु ।।
विद्म ते सभे नाम नरिष्टा नाम व असि ।
ये ते के च सभासदस्ते मे सन्तु सवाचसः ।।
एषामहं समासीनानां वचो विज्ञानमा ददे ।
अस्याः सर्वस्याः संसदो मामिन्द्र भगिनं कृणु ।।
यद्वो मनः परागतं यद्बद्धमिह वेह वा ।
तद्व आ वर्तयामसि मयि वो रमतां मनः ।। (From Jayaswal's **Hindu Polity**)

O Rain-God ! Rain to your heart's content !!

I am well-stocked with food. Milch cows are in my house. On the bank of the river I live with my community in similar houses. My house is well thatched. Fire is burning there.

O Rain-God ! Rain to your heart's content !!

Neither flies nor mosquitoes are here. There is ample grass over the land near the river. My cows, grazing there, are strong enough to withstand the fury of your rains.

O Rain-God ! Rain to your heart's content !!

My wife is pure, and she loves me. We are living happily together since a long time. I have never heard anything uncomplimentary about herself and her character.

O Rain-God ! Rain to your heart's content !!

I feed myself with my own labours. My sons and daughters are healthy and free from disease. I have never heard anything uncomplimentary about them or their character.

O Rain-God ! Rain to your heart's content !!

The places where I keep my animals are full of he and she-calves. There are impregnated cows too. There are bullocks as well.

O Rain-God ! Rain to your heart's content !!

The *Khoontas* (wooden pegs to which cows are tied) are firmly fixed in the ground. The rope is new and strong. Cows cannot break these ropes.

O Rain-God ! Rain to your heart's content !! [1]

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[1] अथचे पत्थयसी पवस्सदेव

१ पक्कोदनो दुद्ध खीरोऽहमस्मि । अनुतीरे महिया समान वासो ॥
छन्ना कुटि आहिलोगिनी । अथचे पत्थयसी पवस्सदेव ॥
२ अंधक मकसा नवज्जरे । कच्छे रुलहतिणे चरन्ति गावो ॥
वुट्ठिंपि सहेय्यु मा गतं । अथचे पत्थयसी पवस्सदेव ॥
३ गोपी मम अस्सवा अलोला । दीघरत्त सवासिया मनापा ॥
तस्सा न सुणामि किंचि पापम् । अथचे पत्थयसी पवस्सदेव ॥
४ वेतनमतोऽहमस्मि । पुत्ता चमे समानिया अरोगा ॥
तेसं न सुणामि किचि पापम् । अथचे पत्थयसी पवस्सदेव ॥
५ अत्थिवसा अत्थि धेनुपा । गोधरणियो पवेनियोपि अत्थि ॥
उसभो पि गवम्पती च अत्थि । अथचे पत्थयसी पवस्सदेव ॥
६ खिला निखाता असम्प वेधी । दामा मुञ्जमया नवा सुसण्ठाना ॥
नहि सक्खिन्ति धेनुपा पि छेत्तुम् । अथचे पत्थयसी पवस्सदेव ॥

Ode To *Anna*

Indeed, the essentially agricultural character of ancient Indian society is borne out by numerous references in the scriptures. These abound in odes to *anna* (foodgrain). Manu has said : "Always worship foodgrains. While eating, never condemn them. Rejoice at the sight of *anna*. On seeing any type of foodgrain, pray that we get it and obeisce."[1]

Foodgrains are grown on this earth and the *Prithvi-Sukta* of *Atharva-Veda* is famous for its lyrical and highly superior ode to *Prithvi* (earth). In *Taitereya Brahmana,* in *Anuvak* two of *Bhriguvalli,* the following is said of *anna* :[2] "All the people of this earth are born of *anna,* live on *anna,* and will ultimately disappear in *anna.* *Anna* is supreme among all material things, hence it is called *Sarvaushadh* (that is, which can cure all diseases). He who worships *anna,* the Brahma incarnate, gets all the *anna.* The men of this earth are born of *anna* and grow because of *anna.*"

Again, in *Anuvak* seven of *Taitereya,* all mankind is thus enjoined : "Never condemn *anna.* Let this be a vow. Life is *anna.* This body, existing out of life-giving *anna,* uses *anna.* The body depends upon life. Life exists within the body. It follows, therefore, that *anna* is settled within (or dependent upon) *anna* He who knows this secret, knows the real truth. He enjoys *anna.* He is blessed with people, animals; he shines, becomes famous and great."[3]

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[1] पूजयेदशनं नित्यमद्याच्चैतदकुत्सयन् ।
दृष्ट्वा हृष्येत प्रसीदेच्च प्रतिनन्देच्च सर्वशः ॥ (2.54)

[2] अन्नाद्वै प्रजाः प्रजायन्ते, या काश्च पृथिवीश्रितः ।
अथो अन्नेन जीवन्ति अथैनदपि यन्त्यन्ततः ॥
अन्नं हि भूतानां ज्येष्ठम्, तस्मात् सर्वौषधमुच्यते ।
सर्वं वै तेऽन्नमाप्नुवन्ति, येऽन्नं ब्रह्मोपासते ।
अन्नाद् भूतानि जायन्ते जातान्यन्नेन वर्द्धते ।
अद्यतेऽत्ति च भूतानि तस्मादन्नं तदुच्यते ॥

[3] अन्नं न निन्द्यात् । तद्व्रतम् । प्राणो वा अन्नम् । शरीरमन्नादम् । प्राणे शरीरं प्रतिष्ठितम् । शरीरे प्राणः प्रतिष्ठितः । तदेतदन्नमन्ने प्रतिष्ठितम् । स य एतदन्नमन्ने प्रतिष्ठितं वेद प्रतितिष्ठति । अन्नवान अन्नादो भवति । महान भवति प्रजया पशुभिर्ब्रह्मवर्चसेन । महान कीर्त्या ।

The Art Of Tilling

Further, the early scriptures not only sing praises of the foodgrains but also contain *mantras* which tell how land should be tilled. Thus *Yajurveda Samhita* says:[1] "O Peasants! Tie the plough and the digging-spade well with rope and spread it on the bullock's back. In well-ploughed and clean land, put the seeds. Let the crops, through recitation of *mantras,* be good, and let our reaping axe be at hand to reap crops which are soon ready."

And further: "Let the sharp iron-diggers attached to the end of our ploughs till the land well, and let the peasants come happily to the fields with their handsome pair of bullocks. Let *Varuna* and *Aditya,* well satisfied through our offerings, give our land rain and sun at proper time and thus we may have good crops."[2]

Such being the importance of agriculture in ancient Indian society, it is hardly surprising that *Taitereya Brahmana* calls upon all people to Grow More Food, a slogan of which we have heard a lot in recent years. In *Bhriguvalli, Anuvak 9,* it says: "Grow more food. It is a great vow. The earth is *anna.* The sky is the basis of *anna.* The earth is dependent upon the sky. The sky is dependent upon the earth. It follows, therefore, that *anna* is settled within (or dependent upon) *anna.* He who knows this secret knows the real truth. He enjoys *anna.* He is blessed with people, animals; he shines, becomes famous and great."[3]

Staggering Bulk Of Ancient Indian Literature

Indeed, ancient Sanskrit literature abounds in references to an agricultural mode of life, the art of agriculture, the manner of village organisation, etc. The bulk of this ancient Indian literature is really staggering both in its volume and in the difficulty of its interpretation. Great minds, both Indian and foreign, have worked upon it, and apart from the original Sanskrit works, the interpretative literature on the subject is abundant.[1] Equally valuable studies, indicative of great industry and erudition, have been done by a number of eminent Hindi scholars, but these have not drawn the attention they deserve. Further, in the years after Independence, a number of well-edited magazines have appeared in Hindi, devoted exclusively to ancient Sanskrit literature and their study and interpretation. The subject of ancient Indian social organisation, based mainly upon the village as it was, requires long and patient study, and we by no means seek to speak with any authority and finality on it, and will always stand subject to correction. As Sanskrit scholars of Kashi and Prayag would tell you, "If there was a student like Indra (the lord of the gods), and if there was a teacher like Brihaspati (the *guru* of the gods), and if each day was equal to a thousand years, even then full knowledge is not possible."[2]

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[1] युनक्त सीरा वियुगा तनुध्वं कृते योनौ वपते ह बीजम् ।
गिरा च श्रुष्टिः सभरा असन्नो नेदीय इत्सृण्यः पक्वमेयात् ॥

[2] शुनं सुकाला विकृषन्तु भूमि शुनं कीनाशा अभियन्तु वाहैः ।
शुना सीरा हविषा तोषमानाः सुपिप्पला ओषधीः कर्त्त नास्मे ॥

[3] अन्नं बहु कुर्वीत । तदव्रतम । पृथिवी वा अन्नम । आकाशोऽन्नादः ।
पृथिव्यामाकाशः प्रतिष्ठितः । आकाशे पृथिवी प्रतिष्ठिता । तदेतदन्नमन्ने
प्रतिष्ठितम् । स य एतदन्नमन्ने वेद प्रतितिष्ठति । अन्नवान अन्नादो भवति ।
महान भवति प्रजया पशुभिर्ब्रह्मवर्चसेनं । महान कीर्त्या ।

Confusion Created By Certain Western Historians

And so we would be humble and try to confine ourselves to the organisation of village communities in ancient India in its bare outline. But, before proceeding further, it would be necessary to make a reference to the origins of Indian history in view of their bearings on subsequent historical processes. Be it borne in mind that the Western historians, who, in fact, were the first to write Indian history, have created a lot of confusion about it, which is only now being cleared, following India's liberation and independent researches by Indian historians. For one, they possessed no knowledge whatsoever about India's customs and practices. More often than not, they have attempted to appraise Indian culture in terms of Western social progress and civilisation. This amounted to, as Dr. Radhakumud Mookerji remarks, "putting Indian life in all its original and spontaneous forms and vigorous growths into the Procrustean bed of the shibboleths and copy-book maxims of Western social science."[1]

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[1] For one of the best bibliographies on the subject, the reader is referred to Cultural History From the Vayu Purana by Dr. D. R. Patil, Deccan College Dissertation Series, Poona, 1946; ix-xiii.

[2] इन्द्रश्चाध्येता बृहस्पतिश्च प्रवक्ता,
दिव्यं वर्ष सहस्त्रं तदपि नां तं जगाम ।

For another, the Western historians were flushed with a sense of their conquest, their 'civilising mission,' their contempt for things Indian,[2] and in their zeal to become history-makers and history-writers, they supplemented the paucity of facts by an abundance of fancy. Thus, to them, in keeping with their own 'civilising mission,' the early Aryans appeared a highly cultured race, who suddenly swoop down, from their "Central Asian Cradle-land," upon the original dark-skinned barbarians, if not savages, of India, with hardly any material or intellectual culture, and conquer and civilise them.[3] This approach to origins of Indian history is obviously wrong and ignores that "great cultural synthesis and fusion (which) took place between the Aryans and the Dravidians ..... Out of this synthesis and fusion grew the Indian races and the basic Indian culture, which had distinctive elements of both."[4]

The Origins Of Indian History

Indeed, as Dr. Mookerji has remarked, "the chronological order of early Indian history has not yet been definitely fixed and ascertained."[5] On the one hand we have certain Vedic enthusiasts, who, basing themselves on the fact that *Rig-Veda* speaks of a period of ice-fall (*Him-pat*), and other such fanciful ideas, ludicrously place it as ten lakh years old[6]; on the other extreme are many Western historians who do not regard it as earlier than 1,000 or 1,500 B.C. Again, very eminent and profound scholars differ as to the original habitat of the Aryans. The late Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the great pioneer in India's struggle for independence and a profound Sanskrit scholar, regarded the North Pole as the cradle-land of the Aryans, and he has sought to establish it in a learned treatise. As against this, Dr. Sampurnanand, the present Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, and a great scholar of Sanskrit and philosophy, regards *Sapta-Saindhav,* that is, the area bounded by six rivers on both sides of the Indus, namely, the Kubha (present day Kabul river), the Saraswati (Indus or Sindhu in present times), the Shatudri (present day Sutlej), the Asik (present day Chenab), the Vitasta (present day Jhelum), etc., as the cradle-land of the Aryans. Dr. Sampurnanand's is a fascinating study,[1] indicative of his great study of the *Vedas* and ancient Indian history, and in order that we may not be diverted from the main topic of our study, we have to resist the desire to describe his findings. He has generally agreed with the findings of Dr. A. C. Das,[2] that Aryans were settled in *Sapta-Saindhava* nearly 25,000 years ago, and this land mass had sea in the south (present day Rajasthan), as also in the east (present day Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, extending right upto Assam); in the west and the north it was surrounded by the Suleman Mountains and the Himalayas, respectively. North of the Himalayas was another sea, extending up to the present Black Sea and beyond that was another land mass extending up to the polar regions.[3]

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[1] **Local Government in Ancient India**, Oxford University Press, London, 1919, p. xiv.

[2] Cf. Henry Sumner Maine's remark : ".... a civilisation as feeble and perverted as that of the Hindoos," in **Ancient Law**, London, John Murray, 1878; p. 20. Numerous other such references can be cited, but we would rather refrain.

[3] As Dr. S. K. De (Research Professor of Sanskrit Literature, Sanskrit College. Calcutta) remarks : "The example of the present-day Europeans, spreading through a restless urge as a superior race into the land of darker races and imposing their culture on them, naturally tempted and coloured this hypothesis of a superior and civilising Aryan people in pre-historic India." (Lecture on **Beginnings of Indian Civilisation**, at the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, July 1951).

[4] **Jawaharlal Nehru : Discovery of India**, Op. cit., p. 71.

[5] **Local Government in Ancient India**, Op. cit., p. 28.

[6] See **Rig Vedic Itihas** (in Hindi) by **Hari Ram Dhaamana**, Lucknow, 1954.

Howsoever it be, anthropological and archaeological researches have established that the races which dwelt in areas now known as India, made the usual discoveries and advances of the Palaeolithic and the Neolithic periods. This fascinating study has yet to make considerable headway in India, but whatever work has as yet been done,[4] confirms the general conclusions about man's advance. The pioneer work was done by British officers of the Geological Department of the Government of India. In 1863, near Madras, and later in Central India and the former State of Baroda, they found implements of the Palaeolithic Age. Again, in 1935, a party of Western archaeologists and anthropologists discovered even older Palaeolithic tools in the valley of the Son river in Bihar. In 1941, under the leadership of late Kashinath Dixit, Director of Archaeology, and Dr. Sankalia, hundreds of microliths were discovered in the bed of the Sabarmati, and a few years later were found four human skeletons who were apparently buried with their tamed dogs. More recently, Shri Nabendu Dutta Majumdar, a former Collector of Sundargarh district in Orissa, reported to the Indian Science Congress Session at Baroda in January 1955, the discovery of Neolithic implements, four caves containing paintings, carvings and inscriptions and also a number of Neolithic sites containing numerous flint fragments bearing clear marks of shipping in Sundargarh district.[1] Again, in March 1955, two groups of pre-historic caves having paintings on their walls and roofs were discovered on the summit of a 500 ft. hill near Deora village in Dilawar area of Chatarpur district in Vindhya Pradesh, the subjects depicted being human forms and such animals as buffaloes and horses.[2]

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[1] **Aryon Ka Adi Desh** (in Hindi), i.e., The Cradle-Land of the Aryans, 2nd edition, Samwat 2001, Bharati Bhandar, Leader Press, Allahabad.

[2] **Rig Vedic India.**

[3] A reference to Wegener's postulate may be of interest here. We have already referred (Chapter I) to his theory of the break-up of the continent or Panagea and the place of our Deccan in it. The forces which had succeeded in rifting the Panagea, now began to pull the various pieces apart, our Deccan drifting due northwards to its present position and the other regions also where they are found now. The drifting process is suggested to have continued over millions and millions of years. In drifting slowly northwards on its own plastic material lying beneath it, like a great ship sailing on the wide ocean, the Deccan came to press against the soft sediments that had been laid down in the sea where now stand the Himalayas. Thus squeezed from the South, the sediments were slowly but intermittently raised up to form hills. The pressure continued unabated and the hills gradually grew into the Himalayas of celestial height. The frontal rim of the Deccan in an effort to raise the mountains got ducked in or bent and it formed a long and deep depression, wherein were deposited the sands and clays brought down by the rivers that had been established on the mountains in course of time, giving rise to the vast Indo-Gangetic plain.

[4] A very informative article on Palaeolithic and Neolithic Researches in India and their findings would be found in the Hindi Monthly **Gyanodaya** (Vol. VI, No. 2 of August 1954, published from Calcutta). It is entitled 'Adi Manav Ki Khoj', i.e., The Search for the First Man, by Krishnanand Gupta.

Relation And Inter-Connection Between The Harappans, The Kol-Mundas & The Aryans

It is apparent that considerable anthropological and archaeological researches and discoveries have to be completed before the links between the various periods are finally and authoritatively established and the exact chronological order fixed up. The great excavations at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, and currently at Rupar in the Punjab, suggest the existence of a highly developed civilisation in India, which must have grown out of the men of the Palaeolithic and Neolithic ages, proofs of whose existence are being increasingly found in widely separated tracts.[3] Shri S. R. Das, Superintendent, Archaeological Survey of India, told the Anthropology and Archaeology Section of the Indian Science Congress at Baroda in January 1955 of the excavations at Rangpur site in Saurashtra. Harappan antiquities, such as copper axe, beads of steatite and cornelian, earthenware, have been unearthed in this recent exploration covering 2,000 miles.[1] According to another report, an Indus Seal carrying the Harappan symbol of a unicorn in front of a manger and a line of Harappan script at the top, has been unearthed in the Dholka taluka, about three miles from Bhurkhi railway station in Ahmedabad district of Bombay State.[2] Bronze Age finds at Addittannalur in Tirunelveli district in the far South, which in many points agree with the discoveries at Harappa, further broadens the sweep of this Harappa culture.[3]

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[1] **Hindustan Times Evening News, 8.1.'55.**

[2] **Hindustan Times, 3.3.'55.**

[3] Nehru says : "There can be little doubt that there lie many such buried cities and other remains of the handiwork of ancient man .... that, in fact, this civilisation was widespread over large parts of India, certainly of North India .... there is reason for believing that it spread to the Gangetic Valley. Thus it was something much more than Indus Valley Civilisation". (**Discovery of India,** Op. cit., p. 67).

The relation and the inter-connection between this Harappan culture and the Aryans of whom we know from the *Vedas* is a subject of widely divergent opinions and theories. Neither are we equipped to deal with this subject, nor is it absolutely relevant to our present discussion. As against the theory of India itself being the original home of the Aryans, there is the widely believed and propounded theory of the Indo-Aryans separating from the original Indo-Europeans, passing in between through an Indo-Iranian period. And even this Indo-European antiquity is being assailed by linguistic, palaeontological, ethnological and anthropological researches. The Egyptians and Assyrio-Babylonians, who are believed to be the contemporaries of the Harappans, have now come to be regarded as possessed of a much older civilisation of an advanced type. The Indo-Europeans are regarded as not being advanced to any appreciable degree, either intellectually or materially, but were a very receptive people, who could imbibe and assimilate ideas from others. Their most notable achievement was taming of the horse and other animals. The *Rig-Veda* testifies to a high degree of civilisation and probably represents the period when the Indo-Aryans separated from the Indo-Iranians (which fact is regarded as confirmed by the close agreement of metre, language and ideas in the *Rig-Veda* and

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[1] **Hindustan Times,** 11. 1. '55.

[2] **Statesman,** (New Delhi edition), 14. 3. '55.

[3] John Marshall, the Indus Valley historian, says: "One thing that stands out clear and unmistakable both at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa is that the civilisation hitherto revealed at these two places is not an incipient civilisation, but one already age-old and sterectyped on Indian soil, with many millennia of human endeavour behind it. Thus India must henceforth be recognised, along with Persia, Mesopotamia and Egypt, as one of the most important areas where the civilising processes were initiated and developed."

Prof. Gordon Childe writes: "The Indus civilisation repesents a very perfect adjustment of human life to a specific environment that can only have resulted from years of patient effort. And it has endured; it is already specifically Indian and forms the basis of modern Indian culture."

Avesta), thus carrying with them all the rich heritage of the vicissitudes of their predecessors.

Howsoever it be, the fact stands out clearly that before the inter-mingling commenced which created the Indian nation, and before the remarkable synthesis known as the Hindu culture, great Dravidian languages were present in the South, and the Kol-Munda (Austric) languages were present in many parts of North India, along with distinct types of culture. The Kols, now confined mostly to West Bengal, Chota Nagpur, and Madhya Pradesh, were then numerous and overran the Gangetic plain. They, it seems, never evolved any great culture, but the Dravidians were on a high cultural level and made important and far-reaching contributions in the synthesis of Indian culture. The effects of this commingling and synthesis are clearly observable in the later *Vedas*, the large element of *desi* or non-Aryan vocabulary of Sanskrit, changes in rituals, etc. Nehru says: "The Aryan migrations are supposed to have taken place about a thousand years after the Indus Valley period, and yet it is possible that there was no considerable gap, and tribes and peoples came to India from the north-west from time to time, as they did in later stages and became absorbed in India."[1] And again: "There is always an underlying sense of continuity, of an unbroken chain, which joins modern India to the far distant period of six or seven thousand years ago, when the Indus Valley civilisation began."[2]

We will not prolong this discussion. The Aryans, it seems, were more agricultural, whereas the Harappans had a highly developed commerce and were exporting cotton textiles, which fact, however, proves that this could have been possible only as a result of surplus from agriculture, which they thus knew. In the synthesis which followed, the rather apparent enveloping Aryan influence is to be traced to the fact that they gave Indian culture its form and unity, its discipline and order, but the deeper substratum of this culture is to be found in the Kol and Dravidian contributions, which have been no less great.

The Vedic People: Essentially Sons Of The Soil

All studies into the economic life of the people of the *Vedas* are agreed that they had crossed the migratory forms of human society, lived in well-settled communities, which were a combination of happy, flourishing, well-fed families who lived unitedly in their separate homes. According to *Atharva-Veda*[1] (3|26), these were happy homes having ample foodstuff and milk and *ghee*. It enjoined upon all members of the household to talk to each other sweetly and be courteous to each other. For, only those houses are blessed with luck "where people eat happily together, where everybody lives cheerfully, where none is hungry or thirsty."

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[1] Discovery of India, op. cit., p. 71.

[2] Ibid, p. 69-70.

Such happy homes existed together in compact rural communities with agriculture as their mainstay. As a matter of fact, such was the importance attached to agriculture that the Vedic people recognised *Kshetrapati* as the God of Agriculture and prayed to him to keep the *Kshetras* (that is, the cultivated fields which today are commonly called *Khet*) fertile and prosperous. In *Riga-Veda* (IV. 5. 12), the first three *Mantras* are addressed to *Kshetrapati*, the Lord of the Field, and Indra, the mighty Rain-God of that hoary past, comes later in *Mantra* seven. And the final appeal is : "May the ploughshare break up our land happily, may the ploughman go happily with oxen; may the earth be watered with sweet showers happily; may prosperity be granted to us."[2]

These people were essentially sons of the soil and in *Prithvi-Sukta* of *Atharva-Veda*, this profound truth is thus proclaimed :[3] "O Mother-Earth ! Confer on us the benefits of all that you produce, the foodgrains and the various juices, and thus purify us. You, Earth, are our mother and we are all your children." That the ploughshare used to be fairly heavy is borne out by the fact that six, eight, twelve and even twenty-four bullocks used to be yoked to it. The ploughshare was called *langal* (a name current even today in Bengal) or *seer* and the pointed end was called *phal*. The handle of the ploughshare used to be extra smooth.[4] And they used to grow almost as many crops as are known to us today. These were: paddy, barley, oil-seeds, *urad, sanva-kangni, masur, khalva, kultha,* wheat,[1] etc. The *Vedas* mention the use of sickle *(Katni and Datra)* for reaping the harvests,[2] their being tied in bundles and brought to the threshing-floor *(Khala)*.[3] The *Shatapath Brahmana* describes agriculture as involving four functions: tilling (*karshana*), sowing (*vapana*), harvesting (*lavana*) and threshing (*mardana*). The process of separating the grain from the husk is mentioned.[4] After this the grain was measured with a utensil called *Urdara*[5] and stored in a place called *Sthivi*.[6]

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[1] इमे गृहा मयोभुव उर्जस्वन्तः पयस्वन्तः । पूर्णा वामस्य तिष्ठन्तस्ते नो जानन्तु जानतः ॥
सूनृतावन्तः सुभगा इरावन्तो हसामुदाः । अक्षुध्या अतृष्यासो गृहा मास्मद् विभितन ॥
येषामध्येति प्रवसन् येषु सौमनसो बहुः । गुहानुपह्वाम यान् ते नो जानन्त्वायतः ॥
उपहूता भूरिधनाः सखायः स्वादुसन्मुदः । अरिष्टाः सर्वपुरुषा गृहा नः सन्तु सर्वदा ॥

[2] इन्द्रः सीतां नि गृह्णातु तां पूषानु यच्छतु । सा नः पयस्वती दुहामुत्तरामुत्तरां समाम् ॥
शुनं न फाला विकृषन्तु भूमि शुनं कीनाशा अभियन्तु वाहैः ।
शुनं पर्जन्यो मधुना पयोभिः शुनासीरा शुनमस्मासु धत्त ॥

[3] यत्ते मध्यं पृथिवि यच्च नभ्यं यास्त उर्जस्तन्वः संबभूवुः ।
तासु नो धेह्यभि नः पवस्व माता भूमिः पुत्रो अहं पृथिव्याः ॥

[4] लांगलं पवीरवत् सुशीमं सोमसत्सरु । (Atharva, 3|17|3)

Irrigation And Dependence On Rains

The *Vedas* mention of two kinds of lands, the fertile ones, or *apnaswati,* and the fallow ones, or *artana.* And there is mention of measurement of fields. After measurements, the fields were divided into plots and given to various people for cultivation.[7] There is also reference to the proper time and season for sowing of different crops.[8] Elementary methods of irrigation through wells is mentioned. Indeed, reference to wells and varieties thereof appear in *Rig-Veda* again and again. The method mentioned of drawing water from the well, namely, by a stone-wheel (*Ashmachakra*), is still to be found in Punjab and round about Delhi. This water thus drawn from the well reaches the fields through big water channels and makes them fertile.[1] The *Rig-Veda* actually speaks of two kinds of water, namely, *Khanitrima* (got by digging) and *Swayamja*[2] (self-flowing like the water of the river).

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[1] चतुरौदुम्बरो भवत्यौदुम्बरः स्रुव औदुम्बरश्चमस औदुम्बर इश्मा आदुम्बर्या उप मन्थिन्यौ। दशग्रम्याणि धान्यानि भवन्ति—ब्रीहियवाः तिलमाषा अणु-प्रियंगवो गोधूमाश्च मसूराश्च खल्वाश्च खलकुलाश्चेति।

(From **Brihadaranyakopanishad,** quoted in the Hindi work **Hamare Gaon ki Kahani,** i.e., The Story of Our Villages, by Ram Das Gaur, published by Sasta Sahitya Mandal, Delhi, VIth edition, 1955 p. 22). The author has quoted another **Mantra** which is as follows:

ब्रीह्यश्चमे मे यवाश्चमे माषाश्च मे तिलाश्च मुद्गाश्च मे खल्वाश्च मे
प्रियंगवश्च मेऽणवश्च मे श्यामाकाश्च मे नीवाराश्च मे गोधूमाश्च मे
मसूराश्च मे यज्ञेन कल्पन्ताम् ॥

The food-grains mentioned are more or less the same as given above.

[2] **Rig-Veda,** 10|101|3 and 8|78|10.

[3] **Rig-Veda,** 10|48|7.

[4] **Rig-Veda,** 10|71|2.

[5] तमूर्दरं न पृणता यवेन । (**Rig-Veda,** 2|14|11.)

[6] बृहस्पतिः पर्वतेभ्यो वितुर्या निर्गा ऊपे यवमिव स्थीविभ्यः ।

(**Rig-Veda** 10|68|3; These and some other references in this para have been taken from an article entitled **Vaidic Aryon Ka Arthik Jeevan,** i.e. the Economic Life of the Vedic Aryans, by the learned Hindi scholar Shri Baldeo Upadhyaya, published in the Diamond Jubilee Number of **Nagari Pracharini,** the journal of Kashi Nagari Pracharini Sabha)

[7] क्षेत्रमिव विममुस्तेजनेनँ । (**Rig,** 1|110|5).

[8] **Taitereya Brahmana** (7|2|10|2).

But, by and large, these ancients depended upon the rains for their agriculture.[3] *Vrita* was supposed to be the name of the demon who was so powerful as to stop the clouds from raining, and then the mighty Indra used to destroy him with his great armour, the *Vajra,* as a result of which the rains came and the fields were watered and the river-waters moved.[4] The prominence given to Indra among the Aryan gods is thus to be traced to their being mainly agricultural. *Atharva-Veda,* in its *Prithvi-Sukta* (52) recognises the gratitude to clouds,[5] so much so that they have been addressed as father and the earth as the wife of the clouds:[6] "We salute this earth, the wife of the clouds, and made so pleasant by it" (42). The close inter-connection between the fields flowing with food crops, the flowing waters and the sea is recognised as also gratitude to rivers[1] *(Prithvi-Sukta, 3 & 9)*: "Where the waters flow uniformly everywhere calmly and gently, let that earth with its numerous currents keep us fully supplied with water and milk, and make us bright and prosperous."

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[1] **Rig-Veda, (8|69|12).**

[2] या आपो दिव्या उत वा स्रवन्ति ।
खनित्रिमा उत वा याः स्वयं जाः ।। (7|49|2)

[3] **In Mahabharata, Van-Parva,** Chapter 32, we have this *shloka* :

पृथिवी लांगलेनेह, कृष्ट्वा बीजं वपत्युत ।
आस्तेऽथ कर्षकस्तूष्णीं, पर्जन्यस्तत्र कारणम् ।
वृष्टिश्चेन्नानुगृहस्तीयात अनेनास्तत्र कर्षकः ।। 47 ।।

which means : "By tilling the land and sowing it, the peasant has done his duty. Now only the rains can make his efforts succeed; he quietly awaits the rains. If it does not rain, the peasant is not to be blamed."

[4] अदर्दरुत्समसृजो विखानित्वमर्णवान्बद्बधानां अरम्णाः ।
महान्तमिन्द्र पर्वतं वियद्वः सृजोविधारा अवदानवं हन् ।। (Rig., 1|54|10)

And again,

अपामतिष्ठद्धरुणह्वरं तमोन्तवृत्रस्य जठरेषु पर्वतः ।
अभीमिन्द्रो नद्यो व व्रिणा हिता विश्वाअनुष्ठाः प्रवणेषु जिघ्नते ।। (Rig., 1|54|10)

[5] वर्षेण भूमिः पृथिवी वृतावृता ।

[6] भूम्यै पर्जन्यपत्न्यै नमोऽस्तु वर्षमेदसे ।

We will, however, not go into any further details of this ancient agriculture. It is clear and apparent, and is widely recognised, that our ancients developed as efficient agriculturists only when they finally settled down in the plains of northern India. Prior to this, in their nomad existence, "the most notable achievement of their own in culture was that they were probably the first to tame the horse."[2] Dr. Vasudeo Sharan Agarwal, a profound Hindi and Sanskrit scholar and an archaeologist of repute, in an essay on *Prithvi-Sukta* of *Atharva-Veda*[3] refers to the find of a book considered to be written in 1,400 B.C., found in village Alamarna in Western Asia, which is a profound work on the art of horse-taming, horse-racing and horses in general, and which abounds in Sanskrit words and terms.

Discovery Of The Iron Plough: Its Implications

This hypothesis is further borne out by the fact that the earliest texts are profuse in their odes to the glory of Raja Prithu, son of Venu, who broke virgin land and brought under cultivation land full of stones, etc.[4] The *Puranas* sing great glory to him. As a matter of fact, this earth came to be called *PRITHVI* after Prithu. He[5] was in fact consecrated as the first king of the earth, after his father, the powerful Venu, having denied the sanctity of the gods and the *Yajnas*, and attempting to install himself as the Almighty and the creator of *Dharma*, was churned by the angry sages led by Marichi, and Prithu was born to the joy of all when Venu's right hand was churned. Prithu vanquished the earth, which in the form of a cow, pleaded for mercy. The king commanded her to always sustain his people which the earth agreed to do. The earth came to be thus Prithu's daughter. Then followed *Prithvidohan* (milching of the earth) in which the king, gods, sages, *Yaksas*, etc., took part.

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[1] यस्यां समुद्र उत सिंधुरापो ।
यस्यामापः परिचराः समानीरहोरात्रे अप्रमादं क्षरन्ति ।
सा नो भूमिर्भूरिधारा पयो दुहामथो उक्षतु वर्चसा ॥

[2] Dr. S. K. De: **Beginning of Indian Civilisation,** Op. cit.

[3] Vasudeo Sharan Agarwal: **Prithvi-Putra,** i.e., Son of Mother Earth, published by Sasta Sahitya Mandal, Delhi, 1949, p. 3.

[4] **Shrimad-Bhagwat,** Skandh IV, Chapters 16-23.

[5] Dr. D. R. Patil: **Cultural History from the Vayu Purana;** Op. cit., pp. 26-29.

This period may well be regarded as the turning point in the life of the Aryans. The use of the iron plough, of which Prithu may well be regarded as the pioneer, drawn by cattle, made large-scale agriculture possible. Iron was at their service and it played a historically revolutionary role. Forests were cleared for tillage and pasturage, and an unrestricted food supply was now available. Population must have consequently increased and settled villages came into existence. It was the patriachal household communities which first settled villages. Land was under common cultivation and through this transitional form developed the village community "wherein was held in solution a good deal of socialism and communism."[1]

The Cow In Vedic Economy

Even otherwise, even before their mastery of agriculture, the Aryans were adept in the domestication of animals and the breeding of herds, and bare supervision and rudest care could reproduce abundant quantities of food in the form of milk and meat. Now, however, with the additional knowledge of agriculture, and abundant food-grains, meat-eating habits apparently recede to the background, and the cow, out of all other domesticated animals, assumes a dominating role, and adds to their riches. Animal husbandry thus played a very important part in their lives. In fact, it would not be wrong to say that agriculture in the Vedic period, as almost always in India, was essentially cow-centred. Milk was one of the main items in the kitchens of the Vedic people, and, in its purest form, was the national drink. It used to be mixed in *Som Rasa,* and was used for the preparation of *Kshiraudan* (better famous as *Kheer* today), apart from preparation of curd and ghee. In *Rig-Veda*[2] (6.28.5), the sage Bharadwaj says the following of cows : "The cow is God; cow for me is like Indra; cow is like the first drop of *Som Rasa*. O Living

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[1] Radha Kumud Mookerji : **Local Government in Ancient India,** Op. cit., p. 22. Of the institutions which thus grew up, Dr. Mookerji remarks that they implied "strong collective or communistic sense and intuitions in the people, combined with a due restraint of that aggressive individualism and keen proprietary instinct which, under the influence of Roman Jurisprudence, emphasizing private property and the sacredness of creditors' rights over those of the debtors', have given, in the opinion of the most thoughtful sociologists and political philosophers, a somewhat wrong direction to the development of nations and states in Europe." (pp. 22-23).

[2] गावो भगो गाव इन्द्रो ये अच्छान् गावः सोमस्य प्रथमस्य भक्तः ।
इमा या गावः सजनास इन्द्र इच्छामीद्धृदा मनसा चिदिन्द्रम ॥

Beings! All these cows are the direct representatives of Indra. I wish for that very Indra with all my heart and soul."

Manu in his *Manu-Smriti* thus directs the *Vaishya Kul*[1] : Look well after the cows and carry on agriculture. By trading in the food-grains thus produced keep the country wealthy and prosperous. The wealth thus earned should be spent in alms and in the spread of education. The *Mahabharata* also abounds in numerous references to the cow. In *Anushasan Parva* (83. 13. 9), the following is said of cow :[2] Cows help men to live through their milk and *ghee,* and their offsprings specially help the agriculturists who with their aid produce numerous kinds of food-grains. The cows help in the performance of *Yajnas* and other ceremonies. The cows, therefore, are very sacred; and the bullocks carry different kinds of loads even while hungry and thirsty. In *Bhagwad Geeta,* Lord Krishna speaks very highly of the cow to Arjun :[3] The cows are the most sacred and the highest, are to be worshipped and are the best in the world, for without curd and *ghee* and other such fats, no *Yajna* can be performed in this world. O Arjun ! the cows help us through their milk, *ghee,* curd, cowdung, their hide and skin and bones, their hair and horns. O Partha! I see no other wealth in the world superior to the wealth of the cow. Cows in fact are the root of all wealth. Nowhere does profanity exist in them; for the entire human existence they are like mother.

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[1] पशूनाँ रक्षणं दानमिज्याध्ययनमेव च ।
वीणकध्यं कुसीदं च वैशस्य कृषिमेव च ।।

[2] धारयन्ति प्रजाश्चैव पयसा हविषा तथा ।
एतासां तनयाश्चापि कृषियोगमुपासते ।।
जनयन्ति च धान्यानि बीजानि विविधानि च ।
ततो यज्ञाः प्रवर्तन्ते हव्यं कव्यं च सर्वशः ।।
पयो दधि घृतं चैव पुन्याश्चैता सुराधिप ।
वहन्ति विविधान् भारान् क्षतृषापरिपीड़िताः ।।

[3] गावः श्रेष्ठा पवित्राश्च पावना जगदुत्तमाः ।
ऋते दधिघृताभ्याँ च नेह यज्ञः प्रवर्तते ।।
पयसा हविषा दघ्ना शकृता मूत्रचर्मणा ।
अस्थिभिश्चोप कुर्वन्ति बालैः शृंगैश्च भारत ।।
गोभिस्तुल्यं न पश्यामि घनं किंचिदिहाच्युत ।
गावो लक्ष्म्याः सदा मूलम् गोषु पाप्मा न विध्यते ।।
मातरः सर्वभूतानाँ गावः सर्व सुखप्रदाः ।।

Emergence Of Cities

The picture thus emerges of a people essentially agricultural and pastoral. These early ancients lived in villages and were unacquainted with *Purs,* that is, cities of the type found at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa. In a prayer in *Rig-Veda,*[1] offered to *Varuna,* the god controlling the weather (incidentally, this prayer very much resembles a prayer offered in a Hebrew scripture to a similar god), it is said : 'O *Varuna* ! we live in mud houses. O God! Defend us. . . . We stand in water and yet we are thirsty. So be kind to us. Even if we break your laws, please excuse us and give us no punishment.' Indeed, according to some commentators, unaware as the Rig-Vedic people were of *Purs,* they called their conquering heroes as *Purandars* because they destroyed the *Purs*[2] of the original inhabitants of India like those found at Harappa. True it is that in later stages, when the story of *Ramayana* opens, and still later, at the time of the *Mahabharata,* we come across well-established cities. Thus, in *Valmiki Ramayana,* a period of time when Hindu civilisation was limited to the Gangetic valley,[3] the city of Ayodhya is described as 12 *Yojanas* in length and 3 *Yojanas* in breadth, well divided by high roads, which are always kept sprinkled with water, with trees on roadsides; markets and shops arranged in nice symmetrical order; having arched gates; thickly packed together by houses, which are not divided in an uncouth manner, situated on level ground, full of rice and other corns, etc.[1]

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[1] मो षु वरुण मृन्मय
गृहं राजन्नहं गमम् ।
मृला सुक्षम मृलय ।
अपां मध्ये तस्थिवासं
तृष्णा विदज्जरितारम
मृला सुक्षम मृलय ।
यत्कि चेदं वरुण दैव्ये जने ।
अभिद्रोहं मनुष्या श्चरामसि ।
अचिति यत्तव धर्मा युयोपिम
मा नस्तस्मादेनसो देव रीरिषः ।

[2] "Indra in the **Rig-Veda** is often described as destroying hundreds of strongholds of the Dasyus, called *Pur*. But this *Pur* according to Keith was no more than a mere earthwork fortification." (**Cultural History from the Vayu Purana,** Op. cit. p. 202).

[3] K. M. Panikkar : **A Survey of Indian History,** Asia Publishing House, 1954, p. 15.

As a matter of fact, not only in regard to this clear advance in habitations and dwellings, but in regard to almost all aspects of life, all ancient literature subsequent to the *Vedas*, and even the other *Vedas* and *Brahamans* subsequent to *Rig-Veda*, show clear signs of inter-mingling of the Aryans with the inhabitants of India, and the continuous emergence of a synthetic culture. To what extent the village communities in ancient India developed out of the original patriarchal households with common ownership of land, and to what extent these took over and adopted the forms of identical communities living here, cannot exactly be suggested. That a culture which produced cities like Harappa, and which had a flourishing export trade with far-away countries in such commodities as textiles, must have had a fairly well-organised and developed agriculture is quite easy of comprehension.[2]

Collectivist Approach To Problems: The Local Bodies

Howsoever it be, the *Vedas*, and specially the *Rig-Veda*, signify a collectivist approach to all problems. Of special significance in this connection would be the last *Sukta* of the last (10th) *Mandala* of *Rig-Veda*. In this hymn[3] *Rishi* Angiras offers his prayer to the deity called *Samajnana* or *Samjnana*. The erudite commentator on the *Rig-Veda,* Sayanacharya, explains this term as signifying the collective, general and national consciousness of an entire people, the political consciousness which is spread evenly *(Sambhavenu)* among all the classes, making up the total population of the country. Commenting upon this hymn, Dr. Radha Kumud Mookerji says that the deity worshipped here "may be called the deity of democracy." The assembly is conceived as "a united body." And further : "It stands for equal rights and liberties of all its members as the common assembly of the whole people, so that there should be a sense of liberty, equality and fraternity in the minds of all."[1]

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[1] आयता दशद्वे च योजनानि महापुरी ।
श्रीमती त्रीणि विस्तीर्णा सुविभक्त महापथा ॥
राजमार्गेण महता सविभक्तेन शोभिता ।
मुक्त पुष्पावकीर्णेन जलसिक्तेन नित्यशः ॥
कपाट तोरणवतीं सुविभक्तान्तरापणाम् ।
सर्व यन्त्रायुधवती मुषिताँ सर्व शिल्पिभिः ॥
गृहगाढा मविच्छिद्रां समभूमौ निवेशिताम् ।
शालि तंडूल सम्पूर्णा भिक्षुकाण्डरसोदकाम् ॥ (Bal-Kand. Ch. V)

[2] See K. M. Panikkar : **A Survey of Indian History** : "Whether the self-conditioned village is an Aryan system or is merely a continuation of the organisation of the earlier peoples, it is difficult to say. Obviously cities like Mohenjo-Daro could only have flourished on an elaborate system of agriculture, and a rural economy based upon villages. It is more reasonable to assume that when the Aryans became an agricultural people, they took over the village organisation as they found it in existence." (Op. cit, p. 9).

[3] "Meet together, talk together, let your minds apprehend alike; in like manner as the ancient gods concurring accepted their portion of the sacrifice.
"Common be the prayer of these (assembled worshippers), common be the acquirement, common the purpose, associated be the desire. I repeat for you a common prayer, I offer for you with a common oblation.
"Common, (worshippers), be your intention; common be (the wishes of) your hearts; common be your thoughts, so that there may be thorough union among you." (Quoted from Rig-Veda Samhita, Vol. VI: English Translation and Notes by H. H. Wilson; Ashtekar and Co., Poona 1928; p. 283).

In his pre-eminent study *Hindu Polity,* Dr. K. P. Jayaswal says that "national life and activities in the earliest times on record were expressed through popular assemblies and institutions."[2] Such gatherings are referred to as *Samiti* (Sam+Iti) meaning 'meeting together.' That such bodies existed at all levels is indicated in *Prithvi-Sukta* (56) of *Atharva-Veda.*[3] "In the villages and forests of the land, in the various meetings and assemblies to discuss problems, I should always, O Mother Earth, speak for your good, for your interests." That even at this time India had come to be a nation of diverse peoples with different languages and religions, and that the sense of unity in this diversity had developed, is made abundantly clear by *Prithvi-Sukta* (45) :[4] 'This land which holds within its bosom men of diverse languages and religions as though they are people living in one household, should, like a milch cow, profusely give us wealth and riches.'

That these ancients had created various local bodies with different functions and of varying characters is undisputed. Vedic society was, indeed, sufficiently developed and settled to admit of an elaborate differentiation of functions. As Dr. Mookerji has listed,[5] the original texts use a number of terms to designate these popular local bodies, viz., *kula, gana, jati, puga, vrata, sreni,*

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[1] "Our Earliest Conception of Democracy", article by Dr. Radha Kumud Mookerji, Hindustan Standard Puja Annual 1954, p. 112.

[2] Hindu Polity : A Constitutional History of India in Hindu Times, Bangalore City, 1943, p. 12.

[3] ये ग्रामा यदरण्यं याः सभा अधिभूम्याम् ।
ये संग्रामाः समितयस्तेपु चारु वदेम ते ॥

[4] जनं बिभ्रती बहुधा विवाचसं नाना धर्माणं पृथिवी यथौकसम् ।
सहस्रं धारा द्रविणस्य मे दुहां ध्रुवेव धेनुरनपस्फुरन्ती ॥

[5] Local Government in Ancient India, Op. cit., p. 29.

sangha, samudaya, samuha, sambhuya-samutthana, parishad, charana. The task of presenting a connected, complete and comprehensive account of these bodies, specially with regard to their functions at the village level, bristles with difficulties. All conclusions to be drawn about these matters have of necessity to be based on the *Vedas* and the *Brahamanical* epics. There is, however, one current of thought among eminent scholars which believes that "these represent very little the state of Indian culture" but "culture as in the imagination of the Brahmin authors."[1]

Again, another set of eminent Hindi and Sanskrit scholars[2] regard the *Vedas* and the *Brahmanas* as originating straight from the Creator's own mind, at the very dawn of creation. The Almighty revealed to the four *Rishis,* Agni, Vayu, Aditya and Angira the four *Vedas, Rig, Yajur, Sam* and *Atharva* respectively, from whom it was passed on to others. According to Vedic mathematics, this creation is 1,97,29,49,055 years old, from which it follows that these epics are as old, which is an obvious absurdity. Indeed, as in other matters, so also in this matter of the date and authorship of the original texts, eminent scholars have widely divergent opinions, and we would rather not tread upon this controversial ground. In this, as in so many other matters relating to the interpretation of Indian history, we would prefer to rely upon Jawaharlal Nehru.[3] Not only as a pre-eminent scholar of Indian history, but also as a man of action moulding the destinies of millions, he has established an unquestioned reputation for his sense of history and its interpretation.

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[1] See **The Social Organisation in North-East India in Buddha's Time** by Dr. Richard Fick, Translated by Shishir Kumar Maitra, University of Calcutta, 1920

[2] See **Ved Ka Rashtriya-Geet** (in Hindi), i.e. the National Song of the Vedas, being an erudite commentary on the **Prithvi-Sukta** of **Atharva-Veda** by Acharya Priyabrat Ved-Vachaspati, Principal, Gurukul Kangri University, Hardwar, published by the said University in 1955; p. 71 of the Foreword.

[3] Says Nehru in **Discovery of India** : "I could not approach these books as Holy Writ which must be accepted in their totality without challenge or demur. ....I was much more friendly and open to them when I could consider them as having been written by human beings, very wise and far-seeing, but nevertheless ordinary mortals, and not incarnations or mouthpieces of a divinity. It has always seemed to me a much more magnificent and impressive thing that a human being should rise to great heights, mentally and spiritually, and should then seek to raise others up, rather than he should be the mouthpiece of a divine or superior power.....What impresses me and gives me hope is the growth of the mind and spirit of man, and not his being used as an agent to convey a message" (Op. cit., p. 77). And later Nehru remarks : "Indian mythology is richer, vaster, very beautiful and full of meaning. I have often wondered what manner of men and women they were who gave shape to these bright dreams and lovely fancies, and out of what gold mine of thought and imagination they dug them out."

And so, accepting that in the original texts the great minds among our ancients revealed the system of thought and society as then existent, we would now proceed to give a brief account of the village system as can be gleaned from these works. Here, we cannot help pointing out, as Dr. Anant Sadashiv Altekar, Head of the Department of History of the Banaras Hindu University, and one of the greatest living authorities on ancient Indian history remarks,[1] no single work in Hindi or English, hitherto published, gives a complete, full and authoritative account of ancient Indian administrative system, its principles and other allied matters. Dr. Altekar's book written in Hindi, as distinct from his other works in English, can be regarded as the first complete work of its kind. In this profound work, in chapter eleven, Dr. Altekar gives a very connected and lucid account of the village system of ancient India.

The Ancient Indian Village: The *Gramani* And Other Officials

What actually was the village in ancient times and who were its officials? *Valmiki Ramayana* mentions of two types of villages, the *Ghosh* and the *Gram,* the former being smaller than the latter. Its officials were called *Ghosh-Mahattar* and *Gram-Mahattar.*[2] The *Ramayana* also mentions *Gramani* as another village official. He was no doubt a highly respected man, so much so that when Rama killed Ravana, the happy gods, in singing praises to him, compared him to a general and a *Gramani.*[3] The *Mahabharata* also mentions of *Ghosh* and *Gram. Ghoshs* are indicated as being smaller in size, generally situated near forests where dwelt the *Gops,* that is, those people who mantained cow-herds. Animal husbandry and dairying was their main occupation. The *Vana-Parva* of *Mahabharata* makes repeated references to such habitations :[4] "In beautiful *Pradeshas* (provinces) there are many *Ghoshs.*" In another *Mahabharata* story, queen Damayanti sent out Brahmins to search her husband Nala, and they searched for him in *Purs, Ashrams,* etc., and also in *Ghoshs* and *Grams*.[1] Manu has very specifically described the boundaries of the village. They should have banyan, *peepul, palash, semal* trees on their boundaries. Tanks, sources of drinking water (wells, and others), temples, etc., should mark the village boundaries.[2] Manu calls the village official by the name of *Gramik*. He says that the maladjustments in the village should be reported by the *Gramik* to the next higher official, the one over ten villages.[3] This *Gramik* was thus responsible for the village administration, and Manu has indicated his functions as collection of the king's dues[4] from the village inhabitants. The next higher official, the one in charge of the administration of ten villages, to whom the *Gramik* had to report, was called *Dashi*.[5] This man had to report to another official responsible for twenty villages, called *Vishanti*.[6] Over him used to be an official responsible for a hundred villages (called *Shati or Shat-Gramadhipati),* and above him was yet another over one thousand villages, called *Sahasra-Gramadhipati*.[7]

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[1] Anant Sadashiv Altekar : **Pracheen Bharatiya Shasan Paddhati,** i.e., Ancient Indian Administrative System, Bharati Bhandar, Allahabad, Samvat 2,004, i.e., 1948; See Foreword.

[2] ग्रामघोष महत्तराः || (**Ayodhya-Kand**, Shloka 15, Sarga 83).

[3] सेनानीर्ग्रामणीः सर्वत्वम् || (**Yudha-Kand**, Shloka 17, Sarga 116).

[4] रमणीयेषुदेशेषु घोषाः संप्रति कौरवः ।

Appointment And Functions Of The Officials

These officials, the *Gramik, Dashi, Vishanti, Shati* and the *Sahasra-Gramadhipati,* were no doubt appointed by the State, as is pointed out very clearly by Manu.[8] Not only this. The king is required to be friendly to the villages and the officials and to keep a hard-working minister in order to watch over their activities.[1] Indeed, the remuneration of these officials was also fixed, not in the form of monthly salaries, in coins, but by conferment of authority to enjoy produce from land. *Dashi* was authorised to have the income of one *kula*, the *Vishanti* of five *kulas*, the *Shati* of one *Grama*, and the *Sahastra-Gramadhipati* of the income of one Nagar (town).[2] That these officials had sufficient work on hand is indicated by two striking instructions given by Manu. These relate to adequate provision for village defence by the construction of *Gulmas* (that is police or military outposts) in an area of two, three or five villages;[3] and the storing of foodgrains, firewood, and other items collected as revenue (*Bali*) from the villages in store or warehouses, constructed in an area of every hundred villages.[4]

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[1] ते पुराणि सराष्ट्राणि ग्रामान् घोषांस्तथा श्रीमान । अन्वेषुन्तोनलं ।।

[2] सीमा वृक्षांश्च कुर्वीत न्यग्रोधाश्वत्थ किंशुकान् ।
शाल्मलीन्शालतालाँश्च क्षरिणश्चैव पादपान् ।।
तडागान्युदपानानि वाप्यः प्रस्रवणानि च ।
सीमासंधिषु कार्याणि देवतायतनानि च ।।
(Manava Dharma Shastra, Shlokas, 246, 248 Ch. VIII)

[3] ग्रामदोषान्समुत्पन्नान् ग्रामिकः शनकैः स्वयम् । शंसेद् ग्रामदशेशाय । (Ibid, 7. 116)

[4] यानि राजप्रदेयानि प्रत्यहं ग्रामवासिभिः ।
अन्नपानेन्धादि नि ग्रामिकस्तान्य वाप्नुयात ।। (Ibid, 7. 118)

[5] दशी कुलं तु भुञ्जीत विंशीपच कुलानि च ।। (Ibid, 7. 119)

[6] देशेशो विंशतीशिनम् ।। (Ibid, 7. 116)

[7] विंशतीशस्तु तत्सर्वं शतेशाय निवेदयेत् ।
शंसेद् ग्राम शतेशस्तु सहस्रपतये स्वयं ।। (Ibid, 7. 117)

[8] ग्रामस्याधिपतिं कुर्याद्दश ग्रामपतिं तथा ।
विंशतीशंशतेशं च सहस्र पतिंभेव च ।। (Ibid, 7. 105)

The High Status Of The *Gramani*

That this *Gramani* had a very high status during Vedic times is revealed by the fact that at the royal consecration, the king's entourage consisted of a *Senani,* a *Gramani,* a *Suta* (charioteer), and a *Bhagdugha* (collector of taxes). These officials were called *Ratnins.* This list is supplemented by the *Shatapatha Brahmana* which includes the *Kshattri* (chamberlain), *Govikartana* (the huntsman), and *Palagala* (the courier). The *Maitrayani Saṃhita* mentions the *Takshan* (carpenter) and *Rathakara* (the chariot-maker). In these *Rajasuya Yajnas* for the king's consecration, he had, on successive days, to make offerings to the gods in the houses of these officials, a ceremony called *Ratna-havis* or Jewel-offering.[5]

Village Control Over The *Gramani:* The Village Elders And Their Election

The appointment of the *Gramani* by the king should not, however, be taken to mean that he was a superimposition from above and could do as he liked in the villages. On the contrary, he had to work strictly under the advice of the Village Elders, the *Gram Vridhas,* who were chosen by an assembly of the village. Dr. Altekar is very specific on the point. He says that these *Gramanis,* whom he explains as the village *Mukhiyas* (a class in our villages which continued even through the British period, bereft, of course, of all the glory and functions of the past), and the village scribe, the record-keeper (like our *patwaris, pateis, kulkarnis,* etc., of the day), "could not act as they liked. They had to work in accordance with the advice of the *Gram Vridhas.* These have functioned from the earliest times as a non-official body. The *Mukhiya* was the executive authority, but if he ever acted against the customary practices, the *Gram Vridhas* used to correct him."[1]

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[1] राज्ञोऽअन्यः सचिवः स्निग्धस्तानि पश्येदतन्द्रितः ।। (Ibid. 7. 120)

[2] दशी कुलं तु भुञ्जीत विंशी पंचकुलानि च ।
ग्रामं ग्रामशताध्यक्षः सहस्राधिपति पुरम् ।। (Ibid, 7. 119)

[3] द्वयोस्त्रयाणां पंचनाम् मध्ये गुल्मधिष्ठितम् ।। (Ibid, 7. 114)

[4] तथा ग्रामशतानाम् चकुर्याद्राष्ट्रस्य संग्रहम् । (Ibid, 7. 114)

[5] The Vedic Age; Bharatiya Itihas Samiti, Op. cit., pp. 431-2.

Before we deal with the functions of these *Gramanis* in the village, we would refer to the election or selection of the *Gram Vridhas,* the Village Elders, who actually were members of what may today be called the Village Panchayat executive. No clear-cut reference to their election is found in the earliest texts, though the subsequent *Jatakas,* etc., are full of it. Dr. Hem Chandra Joshi,[2] a veteran Hindi scholar, a linguist and traveller, and a silent research worker of profound erudition, however, is sure that these bodies were elected. Members of the *Sabha* were called *Sabheya,* a highly respected term. *Sabhyata* or civilisaton and culture originates from this word *Sabheya. Gana,* he says, is a word with an identical meaning and its members were called *Ganuja,* a term still prevalent in Kumayun. And the elected President of the *Gana* was thus hailed by *Gana* members : "O Chief of the *Gana !* We hail you; you are the dearest among our dear ones, hence we have elected you as our President. You are the guardian of our wealth (accountant). We hail you."[3] The prayer offered before beginning the work of the *Gana* is as follows: "Like the Sun and the Moon, we should proceed along a path which should be for the good of all. We should have with us people who are charitable, non-violent and knowledgeable."[1] The *Purohit* (i.e., the village priest), then gave the following injunction : "Your *pyau* (the place for drinking water) should be one, you should all eat foodgrains together. I yoke all of you to a common plough." Dr. Joshi says that a *mantra* of the last *Sukta* of the last *Mandala* of the *Rig-Veda* also formed one of the prayers of the *Ganas*. It means: "Move together, meet together, your hearts should be in unison. Keeping in view the unity of the village, you divide equally your collective property, as the gods have been doing before."[2]

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[1] Anant Sadashiv Altekar : **Pracheen Bharatiya Shasan Paddhati**; Op. cit., pp. 171-2.

[2] See article entitled **Hamara Sanatan Gaon-Panchayat Raj,** i.e., **Our Eternal** Village Panchayat System, in **Arthik Sameeksha** (fortnightly Hindi journal of the Economic & Political Research Department of the All India Congress Committee), Special Land Reforms Number, Vol. I, No. 18, October 18, 1951, New Delhi; pp. 43-48.

गणानां त्वा गणपति ँ॒ हवामहे
प्रियानां त्वा प्रियपति ँ॒ हवामहे
निधीनां त्वा निधिपति ग्वम् हवामहे (Quoted by Dr. Hem Chandra Joshi, Ibid).

Evolution Of Kingship : *Gramani* A King-Maker

It is undisputed that the *Sabhas* and *Samitis* and *Ganas* at the village level had great power and influence. According to *Shatapath Brahmana* (III. 4. 1. 7 and XIII. 2. 2. 18), *Gramani*, among others, was a *raja-krit,* that is king-maker. We have indeed a very interesting account of the development of kingship in *Aiteraya Brahmana*.[3] It appears that the *Asurs,* whom the *Devas* (Aryans) were fighting, had a king and were thus better organised and led, and so always defeated the Aryans. From this they drew their own lessons and decided to have a king in order to be better led. Indeed, there are numerous references to show that kingship was elective.[4] The evolution of kingly power out of sheer political necessity is further borne

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[1] स्वस्ति पथामुचरेम् सूर्याचन्द्रमसाविव ।
पुनर्ददताघ्नता जानता संगमेमहि ॥ (Ibid)

[2] संगच्छध्वं संवदध्वं सं वो मनांसि जानताम्,
देवा भागं यथापूर्वे संजानाना उपासते ॥ (Ibid)

[3] See Majumdar & Pusalkar : **History and Culture of the Indian People, Vol. I., p. 426.**

[4] आत्वा गन्राष्ट्रं सहवर्चसोदिहि प्राङ विशां पति रेकाराट् त्वं वि राज ।
सर्वास्त्वा राजन्प्रदिशो ह्वयन्तू पसद्यो नमस्यो भवेह ॥
त्वां विशो वृणतां राज्याय त्वामिमाः प्रदिशः पंचदेवीः ।
वर्ष्मन्राष्ट्रस्य ककुदि श्रयस्व ततो न उग्रो विभजा वसूनि ॥ (Atharva, III. 4).

An English rendering is :—
To Thee hath come, the kingship with its splendour ;
Oh! Shine as Lord, Sole ruler of the people.
King! Let all regions of the Heavens invite thee
Here let men wait on Thee and bow before thee
The people shall elect Thee for the kingship
These five celestial regions shall elect Thee.
Rest on the height top of kingly power,
Thence as a mighty man award us treasures

out in the following hymn of *Atharva-Veda* (VI.87-88), which addresses a new king thus:

"Here be you firm as a mountain and may you not come down. Be you firm here like Indra; remain you here and hold the realm.

"Firm is the heaven, firm is the earth, firm is the universe, firm are the mountains, let the king of the people be firm.

"Vanquish you firmly, without falling, the enemies, and those behaving like enemies crush you under your feet. All the quarters unanimously honour you, and for firmness the assembly here creates you."[1]

King's Authority Limited By People's Will

As Prof. V. P. Apte points out, kingship became hereditary, but each time the people's choice had to be obtained.[2] Hymns in the *Samhitas* and *Brahmanas* are found welcoming the return of exiled kings, from which the inference is clear that in cases of emergency people had the power to punish a king by banishing him. In *Anushasan Parva* of the *Mahabharata*, Bhishma observes that the king who tells his people that he is their protector, but does not actually protect them, should be slain by his subjects like a mad dog afflicted with rabies. Many instances of kings having to explain and justify their specific acts before the people are found in the scriptures. *Lokaranjan* (gaining the confidence of the people) was prescribed by the *Mahabharata* as the main concern of the kings.[3] Prof. Apte observes: "Whatever we might think of the election of kings as a means of popular control over them, there is no doubt that the people continued to play an important part in politics."[4] According to another commentator, "Zimmer admits that the Vedic polity was limited everywhere by the will of the people. The basis of law was democratic."[5] The same idea is sharply brought forth in the following passage in the coronation oath taken by the king: "Between the night I am born and the night I die, whatever good I might have done, my heaven, my life, my progeny may I be deprived of, if I oppress (injure) you (that is, the people)."[6]

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[1] Quoted from The Vedic Age, Op. cit., p. 430.

[2] Ibid, p. 428.

[3] लोकरञ्जनमेवात्र राज्ञां धर्मः सनातनः । (12-57)

[4] The Vedic Age, Op. cit., p. 428.

[5] R. K. Chaudhry : Studies in Ancient Indian Law and Justice, Patna, 1953; p. 4.

[6] एतेनैन्द्रेण महाभिषेकेण क्षत्रियं शापयित्वा अभिषिञ्चेत स ब्रूयात्
सह श्रद्धया याञ्च रात्रीमजायेहं याञ्च प्रेतास्मि तदु भयमन्तरेणेष्टापूर्त्तं
मे लोकं सुकृतमायुः प्रजां वृञ्जीथा यदि ते द्रुह्येयमिति ॥
(Aitareya Brahmana, 8.15).

Dr. R. C. Majumdar quotes (from *Yajur-Veda)* the following advice which the priest offered to the king at the time of the coronation: "As a ruler, from this day onwards, judge the strong and the weak impartially and fairly. Strive unceasingly to do good to the people, and above all, protect the country from all calamities."[1]

There is definite evidence to prove that in course of time the successors of the king were elected from the same families, and as and when the father-right developed in society, kingship also developed as hereditary succession. But, in contradistinction to the development of the king institution in Europe, the king in India could never become an absolute autocrat. We hardly come across Neros and others of that variety in Indian history. This has been sought to be explained by the fact that the priestly order, the Brahmins, continued to exercise great influence.[2] Apart from this, however, (and we know that many scholars and commentators are not prepared to give much credence to the role of *Dharma*), popular control over the king's powers is also to be traced to the system that had developed with the village as the basic unit of administration. The king had to be the "protector of cattle and agriculture,"[3] in lieu of which the villages paid him *Bali* or tax. This, in fact, is a vow in *Atharva-Veda*. Mantra 62 of *Prithvi-Sukta* says : "O Mother-land ! all people born here should be free of disease, we should live long and ever acquire knowledge and always collect for you taxes."[4]

The Place Of Panchayats In Ancient Polity

Indeed, without the cooperation of the village, and without fulfilling his obligations to the people, the king could not wield his authority. In *Sabha-Parva* of the *Mahabharata*, the sage Narada questions king Yudhishtir about his administrative arrangements. He asks him a number of questions : "Are your peasants happy and satisfied with you? Is your nation completely dependent on rains (or are there also other means of irrigation)? Is it that the grain and seed of your cultivators is destroyed? Do you give loan to the peasants at low interests in order to help them in their agricultural operation?"[1] And these are followed by another very striking question, which brings forth the role of the Panches or the elected *Village Elders* in the entire administrative set-up. Narada asks : "Do brave and wise Panches of your nation engage in collection of funds and other allied Panchayat activities and thus add to general happiness?"[2]

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[1] R. C. Majumdar : **Ancient India,** Banaras, 1952. p. 79.

[2] "The royal authority was also materially curbed by the power and prestige of the *Purohita*......and the influence of the priesthood generally." **(Vedic Age** Op. cit. p. 354). Also : "One fundamental principle which characterises the political thoughts of the Hindus is the conception of *Dharma* or Sacred Law, which sustains the universe and to which both the king and all sections of the community owe allegiance. The sages, not the king, had the power to interpret this law. which was included in the Scared canon, and it was the clearly recognised duty of the king to abide by, and give effect to it. The moral and spiritual sanctions behind this Scared Law were a sufficiently powerful motive, more than what we can imagine today, for restraining the wilful exercise of authority by the king." (Ibid, p. 430).

[3] स एसा पशुपालो भूत क्षेत्रपालस तथैव च । (Vayu-Purana, 94, 22-4)

[4] उपस्थास्ते अनमीवा अयक्ष्मा अस्मभ्यं सन्तु पृथिवि प्रसूताः ।
दीर्घं न आयुः प्रतिबुध्यमाना वयं तुभ्यं बलिहृतः स्याम ॥

Unique Relationship Between The State And The Village Community

These questions clearly indicate the close inter-relation that had grown up in ancient India between the State and the village. This peculiar relationship has been very aptly described by Dr. Radha Kumud Mookerji in the following words: "India presents the rare and remarkable phenomenon of the State and society co-existing apart from, and in some degree of independence of each other, as distinct and separate units or entities, as independent centres of national, popular and collective life and activity. Both of them were independent organisms with distinct and well-defined structures and functions of their own and laws of growth and evolution. The limits of State interference were accordingly so defined and fixed as not to encroach upon the sphere of the activities of the social organisation. A policy of non-interference was recognised as the ideal policy of the State, the functions of which were ordinarily restricted to the 'irreducible minimum,' viz., the protection of life and property and realisation of the revenue for the proper exercise of duty. There was a well-understood delimitation of the respective boundaries of the political and social organisations, both of which were co-operating agencies for the promotion of the common weal."[3]

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[1] कच्चितुष्टा कृषीवलाः ।।
कच्चिद्राष्टे तडागानि पूर्णानि च बृहन्ति च ।
भागशोविनष्टानि न कृषिर्दैवमातृका ।।
कच्चिनभक्तं बीजं चकर्षकस्याऽवसीदति ।
प्रत्येकं च शतं वृद्ध्या ददास्यृणमनुग्रहम ।। (Ch. V. Sh. 79-81).

[2] कच्चिच्छूराः कृतप्रज्ञाः पञ्च पञ्चस्वनुष्ठिताः ।
क्षेमं कुर्वन्ति संहृत्य राजञ्जनपदे तव ।। (Ch. V. Sh. 83)

[3] Local Government in Ancient India, Op. cit, pp. 3-4.

The *Report of the Congress Village Panchayat Committee* says : "In ancient India, it is apparent, a relationship of a unique type had developed between the State and the village community," and that "intimate relationship then existed between the Government and the Panchayats."[1] Dr. Altekar has opined : "From ancient-most times, villages in India have been the axle of administration. The position of towns in ancient Indian life was negligible."[2]

Villages in ancient India could attain such a decisive importance in the administrative machinery mainly because of the close unity in which they were knit through the Panchayat institution, the keen sense that existed among the populace about their rights and duties, and the high level of justice, fairplay and efficiency at which the Panchayats functioned as also the confidence they commanded and the respect they inspired among the village populace. This, in turn, could be possible because the State gave the village body the fullest and completest authority and rights over all affairs relating to the village, insisting, of course, on regular payments of taxes.

Functions Of The Village Panchayat And The *Gramani*

In this structure, as stated earlier, the *Gramani* was the key person. We have already referred to the differences of opinion which exist about his being elected or nominated.[3] Dr. Altekar opines that this post was hereditary and used to be held generally by one who was not a Brahmin, but the State could appoint any other person of the same family in case the hereditary incumbent was found incapable. In the *Gramani,* it would appear, the relationship which developed between the State and the people found an exact expression. He was like father and mother to the village folk, and "though responsible to the State, he was essentially a man of the people and used to be ever ready to protect their interests. He was as necessary for the State as for the people."[1]

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[1] Op. cit., pp. 31-32.

[2] **Pracheen Bharatiya Shasan Paddhati**, Op. cit., p. 168.

[3] We have quoted the firm views of Dr. Hem Chandra Joshi about his being elected. Prof. V. M. Apte is not very clear on the point (vide the sections written by him in **The Vedic Age**). At one place he says : "For their normal or peace-time subsistence some of them were probably granted villages, because the *Gramani* seems to have been more often a nominee of the king rather than a popularly elected officer, and probably the post was hereditary in such cases." (Op. Cit., p. 451). At another place Prof. Apte has said : "The head of the village was the *Gramani* (leader of the *Gram*) who discharged military duties in times of war and civil duties in times of peace. Whether the post of the *Gramani* was hereditary, and whether the officer was nominated by the king or elected by the village council, cannot be definitely stated. The varying local customs make it likely that all these modes of appointment in the case of a *Gramani* were current in different parts of the country," (pp. 487-488).

Let us now look into the functions of the Vedic *Gramani*. No clear-cut and specific picture is available for the Vedic times, as for the later periods.[2] Some facts, however, clearly stand out. The first duty of the *Gramani* was to look after village defence and he headed the corps of volunteers and guardsmen organised for the purpose. His second task was to realise the State dues and keep records of the realisations. All important papers used to be under his direct charge, and the village body of elders, as also the entire village community, co-operated with him in this task. There may have been some other functions of the *Gramani*, but these are the most important and significant among them, apart from the judicial ones, to which we shall come presently.

The Taxation Policy

Collection of State dues thus appears to be the most important function of the village community in ancient times. The State held the *Gramani* responsible for the collections, but, it is obvious, it was a responsibility shared by the entire population in the *Gana*[3] of which the *Gramani* was the head. And this work could smoothly be carried on by the village bodies because the taxes, by and large, were based on justice and fair play. The instructions in the old texts on this point are very specific. In the *Mahabharata (Shanti-Parva)*, Bhishma declaims to Yudhishithira on this point at length. We quote below the relevant extracts from an English translation by the late Pratap Chandra Ray.[4] Said Bhishma : "That foolish king who pursues Profit without driving away lust and wrath, fails to acquire virtue and ultimately sacrifices Profit as well....With a sixth part, upon fair calculation, of the yield of the soil, as his tribute, with fines and forfeitures levied upon offenders, with the imposts according to the scriptures, upon merchants and traders for the protection granted to them, a king should fill his treasury. Realising this just tribute and governing the kingdom properly, the king should, with heedfulness, act in such a way that his subjects may not feel the pressure of want. . . .Never desire to fill thy treasury by acting unrighteously or from covetousness. . . . . .That avaricious king who through folly oppresses his subjects by levying taxes not sanctioned by the scriptures, is said to wrong his own self. As a person desirous of milk never obtains any by cutting off the udders of a cow, similarly a kingdom afflicted by improper means, never yields any Profit to the king. He who treats a milch cow with tenderness always obtains milk from it. Similarly a king who rules his kingdom by the aid of proper means, reaps much fruit from it. By protecting a kingdom properly and ruling it by the aid of judicious means a king, O Yudhishthira, may succeed in always obtaining much wealth.... Imitate the example, O king, of the flowerman and not of the charcoal-maker."

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[1] Altekar : **Pracheen Bharatiya Shashan Paddhati**, Op. cit., p. 171.

[2] We have. however, noticed that a number of writers have given very concrete details about *Gramani* functions in ancient India, and in this Kautilya and even Shukra (800 A.D.) are included. These latter no doubt give detailed accounts (See Chapter III), but we are not sure how far these may be regarded as valid for Vedic times.

[3] चारमन्त्र विधानेषु कोषसन्निचयेषु च ।
नित्ययुक्ता माहाबाहो बर्द्धन्ते सर्वतो गणाः ॥ (Shanti Parva, Ch. 107)

i.e. "*Ganas* prosper all-sidely as they always attend......to the collection of revenue to the exchequer." (K. P. Jayaswal : **Hindu Polity**, Op. cit., pp. 109-111).

[4] **The Mahabharata of Krishna-Dwaipayana Vyas, Part XIX, Santi Parva (Sections CLIV-CLXXIII)**, published and distributed by Pratap Chand Ray, C. I. E., Bharata Press, Calcutta, 1891; see Section LXXI, pp. 233-235.

Manu has also propounded similar principles of taxation. His maxim is: No taxation without protection; and his principle of land ownership is : Land belongs to him who clears off the timber. And he enjoins :[1] "Like the leech, the calf and the bee, who take their sustenance (i.e., food) little by little, the king should take moderate annual taxes from his kingdom." And "the test of a just taxation system lies in the fact that the king as well as the people, specially the cultivators and businessmen, should have the feeling that they are both being adequately treated and getting the due profits of their labours and activities."

The Judicial Functions: A Glimpse Into Rama's Courts

As for the judicial functions of the village bodies in those ancient times, no clearly defined evidence is available. That the judiciary of the times functioned at a high level of justice and fairplay, and worked expeditiously, is revealed from some very typical questions which Rama asked to Bharat when the latter met the former near the Chitrakut mountains after he went to exile. These questions, among others, related to the manner in which justice was being administered under Bharat's rule. Rama asked :[1] "Dost thou condemn any through avarice, without regard for justice or subjecting the offender to closer examination by those eminent in law and who are of good conduct? Are those who serve thee just men, innocent of lying and theft, and not of ill repute? O Noble one, those who are apprehended for theft, caught in the act and their guilt established on due examination, are they able to obtain release by bribing the officials? In a dispute between the rich and the poor man, do thy experienced judges carry out justice uninfluenced by a desire for gain?"

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[1] यथाल्पाल्पमदन्त्याद्यं वार्योकोवत्सषटपदाः ।
तथाल्पाल्पो गृहीतव्यो राष्ट्राद्राज्ञाब्दिकः करः ॥
विक्रयं क्रयमध्वानं भक्तं च सपरिव्ययम् ।
योगक्षेमं च संप्रेक्ष्य वणिजो दापयेत्करान् ॥ (Sec. VII, 127-139).

And Rama concluded these series of questions relating to administration of justice under Bharat by the following profound remarks :[2] "O Prince of Raghu, the tears of those who are unjustly condemned by a monarch who lives at ease and is indifferent to justice being meted out, destroy his children and his herds!" The judges were called *Dharma-Palaks,* and a full bench was presided over by the king himself, who was thus the Chief Justice. The seat occupied by the king when thus presiding was called *Dharmasana.* The full bench included the Brahmins acting as *Purohits* to the court, others well versed in customs and usages, some people from the defence and the economic wing of the administration, some leading businessmen and nearest kinsmen of the king. It was provided that the complainant be produced before the court at once without any formalities and other paraphernalia with which we are familiar today, like court-fee, stamp-fee, etc. Actually, an ancestor of Rama, Raja Nimi, once unnecessarily delayed the admission of Sage Vashishtha to the court, when he had come with a complaint, and Vashishtha thereupon cursed him. In an essay[3] on the judicial system as revealed in Valmiki's *Ramayana,* Dr. Shantikumar N. Vyas opines that on account of justice being expeditious and merciless, the citizens respected each other's rights and very few people took recourse to the law courts. Consequently "in the courts under Rama's rule there was little work in the courts."[1] The greatest emphasis was laid on impartial meting out of justice. Bharat told Kaushalya that the person responsible for sending Rama to exile will be cursed by the same sin which befalls a partial judge of the court.[2]

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[1] The English translation is taken from **The Ramayana of Valmiki, Vol. I, Bal-Kanda and Ayodhya-Kand),** translated by Hari Prasad Shastri, Shanti Sadan, London, 1952; p. 372. The original text is as follows :—

कच्चिदार्यो विशुद्धात्माऽऽक्षारितश्चोरकर्मणा ।
अपृष्टः शास्त्रकुशलैर्न लोभाद्बध्यते शुचिः ॥
गृहतिश्चैव पृष्टश्च काले दृष्टः सकारणः ।
कच्चिन्न मुच्यते चोरो धनलोभान्नरर्षभ ॥
व्यसने कच्चिदाढ्यस्य दुर्गतस्य च राघव ।
अर्थं विरागाः पश्यन्ति तवामात्या बहुश्रुताः ।

(Ayodhya-Kand, VIIIth Sarga, 56-58).

[2] The Ramayana of Valmiki, Ibid, pp. 372-373.

[3] See Weekly Hindustan, dated September 5, 1954; (published by Hindustan Times Press, New Delhi).

Justice In The Village: King's Courts Were Appellate Bodies

The judicial functions in Rama's court, as also in the courts of all the long line of kings that preceded him,[3] it should be borne in mind, were essentially of the appellate type, the administration of justice being primarily the task of the *ganas, kulas*, etc., that is, the bodies at the village level. *Mahabharata (Shanti Parva)* says that in *ganas*, "criminal justice should be administered promptly and by men learned in law, through the President."[4] In *Shanti Parva*, Bhishma tells Yudhishthira at length about these bodies, which denotes for them a period of existence and functioning before the rise of kingship. In course of time, when the customs and usages of these bodies had developed and taken roots, they entered into confederations and the institution of kingship came into being and these bodies came to owe allegiance to it. Their laws were, however, held in the highest respect in the courts of the kings, and appeals against the decisions of the village bodies were decided in accordance with current customs and practices. The kings of themselves imposed or promulgated no laws of their own, from which the obvious implication is that the laws of the *ganas* were quite comprehensive. K. P. Jayaswal points out that these laws of the *ganas* were called *Samaya*. "*Samaya*, literally, means a decision or a resolution arrived at in an assembly, that is, the laws of the *ganas* were passed in their meetings".[5]

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[1] दृश्यते न च कार्यार्थी रामे राज्यं प्रशासति ।

[2] भक्त्या विवदमानेषु मार्गमाश्रित्य पश्यतः ।
तेन पापेन युज्येत यस्यार्योनुमते गतः ॥ [See **Weekly Hindustan**, Op. cit.]

[3] Rama is supposed to have flourished 65 generations after Manu Vaivasvat, the first traditional king in India. Manu's date & the great floods in which he is supposed to have saved humanity occurred in 3100 B.C., and Rama is supposed to have lived about 1950 B.C. (**The Vedic Age**, Op. cit., p. 270).

[4] निग्रहः पंडितैः कार्य्यः क्षिप्रमेव प्रधानतः ।

[5] **Hindu Polity**, Op. cit., p. 106.

Village Laws As Laid Down By Narada, Brihaspati, Etc.

Narada, Brihaspati, Katyayana, Yajnavalkya and other commentators did the great job of compiling these innumerable laws that had developed in the village bodies and were fortified by customs and usages. There is no definiteness about the dates when these sages lived and did their compilation. References to them are strewn all over the ancient stories of India. These compilations were handed down from the *guru* to the *shishya* down the centuries through the spoken word, and their appearance in the form of definite written books is not traceable earlier than second or third century B. C. May be that Panini's great work in the 3rd-4th century B. C. laid the tradition for definite written compilations. The fact that these sages placed together the laws of different village bodies, as also their being passed down through the spoken word, in which process certain additions, alterations and variations were inevitable, and on top of it, the personal factor of those who first placed them in book-form, would to a considerable extent explain the differences that are sometimes found among them, even to the point of diametrically opposed opinions (as, for example, on the question of ownership of land). They, however, do give an idea of the judicial work of the village bodies in ancient times, and we will conclude our discussion of the judicial functions of village communities in ancient India by brief quotations from them.

Narada says: "Gathering (*kula*), Corporation (*shreni*), assemblies (*gana*), one appointed by the king and the king (himself) are invested with power to decide law suits". And further: "The claimants, after having produced a pledge the value of which has been well ascertained, shall cause the plaint to be written. The defendant, immediately after having become acquainted with the tenor of the plaint, shall write down his answer which must correspond to the tenor of the plaint." Brihaspati says: "The part called the declaration, the part called the answer, the part called the trial, and the part called the deliberation of the judges regarding the *onus probandi*: these are the four parts of the judicial proceedings. The plaint is called the first part, the answer is the second part, the trial is the third part and the judgment is the fourth part."

"Held In Solution A Good Deal Of Socialism And Communism"

Not only are the procedures to be followed given but also other details regarding taking of evidence, award of punishment, and the practice of trial by ordeal are enumerated. Manu held that "witnesses from neighbouring villages should be called to give evidence in a boundary dispute on failure of witnesses from the two villages." According to Narada: "In all quarrels regarding landed property or boundaries, the decision rests with the neighbours, the inhabitants of the same town or village, (the other) members of the same community, and the senior inhabitants of the district. As also with those living outside on the outskirts of the village and who live by tillage of the fields situated in those parts and with herdsmen, bird-catchers, hunters and other inhabitants of the woods. These men shall determine the boundary." Brihaspati says : "In a dispute regarding a house or field, the decision belongs to the neighbours as well as to the inhabitants of that town or village or to members of the same society, and to the elders (of that district). Likewise, to husbandmen, artisans, servants, cowherds, hunters, gleaners, diggers of roots, fishermen, kinsmen, etc."[1]

This ancient Vedic society, which does not appear to be possessed of striking property differences and lived for the most part in pastoral villages, has been called by some as of a primitive type, primitive in the sense that ownership of things was communal, etc. It is none of our purpose here to go into a discussion of this debated question. That this society "held in solution a good deal of socialism and communism" is beyond doubt.

Growth Of Exchange: Cow As The Medium

Equally undoubted, however, is the fact that, leaving aside the early Rig-Vedic period, exchange had advanced far enough; a prosperous class of merchants and cities had come into being, and the institution of kingship had come to stay. In Chapter I we have referred to the growth of exchange in early societies. It has been held by scholars that the *Rig-Veda* contains portions of early Aryan life, before their settlement in India, when they were in the nomadic stage and were almost entirely communal and communistic. In the course of their endless movement, they apparently came to possess an increasing number and variety of commodities for exchange. This creates the necessity of an article which may possess the character of a general social equivalent. And a comment of Marx would be found very instructive here. Says Marx: "The particular type of commodity to which it first sticks is a matter of accident. Nevertheless there are two circumstances whose influence is decisive. The money-form attaches itself either to the most important articles of exchange from outside, and these in fact are primitive and natural forms in which the exchange-value of home products finds expression; or else it attaches itself to the object of utility that forms, like cattle, the chief portion of indigenous alienable wealth. Nomad races are the first to develop the money form, because all their worldly goods consist of movable objects and all, therefore, directly alienable; and because their mode of life, by continually bringing them into contact with foreign communities, solicits the exchange of products."[1]

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[1] We have taken these references from **Administrative System of the Marathas** by Surendranath Sen, University of Calcutta, 1925; pp. 566-570.

This analysis fits in quite correctly into the society of the early Aryans. Cow was their chief medium of exchange. Things used to be bought and sold through the exchange of cows. In a *mantra* of *Rig-Veda*, the sage Vamdev asks as to who is this man who purchases my this Indra idol for ten cows only.[2] In another *mantra* it is said that hundred, one thousand and even ten thousand cows are not sufficient to purchase Indra.[3] More than this, one thousand cows came to constitute the wergeld for killing a Kshatriya, one hundred cows in the case of a Vaisya and ten cows for killing a Shudra.[4]

The reference to cow as a medium of exchange shows that markets had developed and the link between the various commodity owners was established through it. In an exchange economy, the commodity owners, entering the market as independent owners, endeavour to receive as large a quantity of another commodity as possible. As exchange develops and many commodities come in contact with one another, a universal equivalent evolves, that is, it becomes a means of expressing the value of all other commodities. The cow thus had become this universal equivalent in the developed exchange economy of ancient India.

Growth Of Trade Routes And Markets: Metallic Money

This obviously signifies the existence of markets, haggling in markets, and considerable trade. Barter may yet have obtained hither and thither, but that cow had become the unit of value is undisputed. Haggling in the market was well known, and apart from trade with alien tribes or foreign countries, of which hardly any clear indications are available, there was undoubtedly an extensive inland trade. For this we need trade channels, and in later scriptures we come across ample references to such trade routes. Rivers, and the Ganga specially, are mentioned as channels of trade. It is apparent that these ancients had realised the importance of the construction and the up-keep of national highways. *Atharva-Veda* says:[1] "O Earth! The roads that lie over you for the movement of men and chariots and other transports, over which all have the right of movement, may remain safe from dacoits and looters, and may all these roads be for the well-being of all."

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[1] **Capital, Op. cit; p. 88.**

[2] क इमं दशभिर्ममेन्द्रं क्रीणाति धेनुभिः ॥ (4. 24. 10)

[3] महेचनत्वामद्रिवः परा शुल्काय देयाम् ।
न सहस्राय नायुताय वज्रिवो न शताय शतामघ ॥ (8. 1. 5)

[4] This is given in **Apastamba Dharma-Sutra; (See The Vedic Age; Op. cit.; pp. 490-491).**

The development of such trade of necessity gave rise to a class of merchants and to metallic money. One such unit to which references are found is the *nishka*. It is mentioned as being exchanged for a horse. It would appear, however, that in Vedic times metallic money could not dominate the cow as the medium of exchange. Of the emergence of a class of rich Vaisyas (*Shreshthins*), who had acquired wealth in trade and agriculture, and who were probably the headmen of guilds, in later Vedic times, there is no doubt. Money-lending had also become a flourishing business and *Shatapatha Brahmana* refers to *Kusidins,* that is, a class of usurers, the profession being practised, among others, by the Brahmins as well. Probably a gold coin called *satmana,* besides the *nishka,* also came into existence.

What effects these developments had on Vedic society is not clearly known because of the paucity of knowledge about India's history between the period when the Mahabharata War ended and Buddhism arose. It is, however, clear that the mercantile community grew in strength, and cow as a medium of exchange was increasingly replaced by metallic money. In this process, however, the village communities retained their individuality and characteristic features and, in contrast with the West, remained, on the whole, unaffected by growth of trade and commerce.

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[1] ये ते पन्थानो बहवो जनायना रथस्यवर्तमानश्च यातवे ।
यैः संचरन्त्युभये भद्र पापास्तं पन्थानं ज्येमानमित्रमतस्करं
तच्छिवं तेन नो मृड ॥ (12. 14. 42)

CHAPTER III

VILLAGE COMMUNITIES IN INDIA, 600 B.C.—1800 A.D.

> *"So long, Ananda, as the Vajjins hold full and frequent assemblies;*
>
> *"So long as they meet together in concord and rise in concord and carry out Vajjin business in concord;*
>
> *"So long as they enact nothing not already established, abrogate nothing that has not been already enacted and act in accordance with the ancient institutions of the Vajjins, as established in former days;*
>
> *"So long as they honour and esteem and revere and support the Vajjin elders and hold it a point of duty to hearken to their word;*
>
> *"So long may the Vajjins be expected not to decline but to prosper."*[1]
>
> *—BUDDHA*

> *"India of the peasant and rustic life, of village communities, of forest hermitages and spiritual retreats has taught the world many great lessons, but has wronged no man, has injured no land and sought no domination over others."*[2]
>
> *—S. RADHAKRISHNAN*

> *"Reason is unstable; scriptures are various; there is not a sage whose word may be taken as authoritative; the inmost principle of* Dharma *is hidden in the cavity of man's heart; that path, therefore, is the right path by which the public at large has thought fit to travel."*[3]
>
> *—MAHABHARATA*

THE development of exchange and trade within the Vedic society led to the formation of towns and the growth of a mercantile community. It would appear, however, that barter continued to prevail along with money economy, and by the time of the Mahabharata War, *Srenis*, a term found frequently in later Buddhist and *Jatak* literature, corresponding more or less to the guilds of medieval Europe, were few and far between. Scholars are divided about the date of the Mahabharata War, but 1,500 B.C. may be regarded as the most commonly accepted date. The Pandavas, who triumphed in that War, were succeeded by Raja Parikshit and Janamejaya, but after them follow many centuries on which the historians hardly throw any light. While fresh archaeological discoveries and historical researches have yet to throw light on these eight or nine centuries of Indian history, it is the commonly accepted belief of most scholars that it was a period of the general decline of the Brahaminical civilisation of the *Vedas.*

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[1] From K. P. Jayaswal's Hindu Polity, Op. cit., pp. 42-43.

[2] Mahatma Gandhi : Essays and Reflections on his Life and Work, Edited by Radhakrishnan, Second (Enlarged) Edition, 1949, p. 26.

[3] तर्कोऽप्रतिष्ठः श्रुतयो विभिन्ना, नैको ऋषिर्यस्य मतं प्रमाणम् ।
धर्मस्य तत्वं निहितं गुहायां, महाजनो येन गतः स पन्थाः ॥ (III, 3[illegible]—11[illegible]

According to Hindu beliefs, the *Kali-Kal,* that is that period of the world when unrighteousness and sin dominate it (which, in turn, is to be followed, as a result of a possible *Avatar* or incarnation of God, by an age of truth, piety and righteousness), commences when Parikshit succeeds the throne of the Pandavas. Howsoever it be, Vedic religion continued to prevail in India during these centuries. But, as Nehru has observed,[1] this Vedic religion "had changed and fallen from its high estate. The Brahmin priests had introduced all manners of rites and *pujas* and superstition, for the more there is of *puja,* the more do the priests flourish. Caste was becoming stricter, and the common people were frightened by omens and spells and witchcraft and quackery. The priests got the people under their control by these methods, and challenged the power of the Kshattriya rulers. There was thus rivalry between the Kshattriyas and the Brahmins."

Post-*Mahabharata* Period : Republics And The Popular Tradition

We are not aware of the exact forms which this conflict took, nor is it entirely relevant to our discussion. It is clear, however, that in the period which followed India witnessed a remarkable development of republics, the *Mahajanapadas,* though kings continued to rule over large areas. It thus follows that besides the Brahmin and the Kshattriya traditions, there existed "a third type of tradition, distinct from the other two, *viz.,* the popular tradition —a tradition which was a common heritage of the simple folk."[2]

These republics, in essence, were modelled, more or less, upon the principles on which the self-governing village communities functioned, and in them the village bodies played an important role. Later, however, in the 6th century B.C., India witnessed the rise of Magadha (an area comprising present day Bihar and east Uttar Pradesh, though the boundaries were never rigid and expanded or contracted in accordance with the triumphs and defeats of the

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[1] Glimpses of World History, Op. cit., p. 36.

[2] Ratilal N. Mehta : Pre-Buddhist India, Examiner Press, Bombay, 1939; p. 9.

Magadhan rulers), from whence India's recorded history may be said to commence. The first great kings of Magadha were Bimbisara (544-493 B.C.) and Ajatsatru (493-462 B.C.). As K. M. Panikkar has said,[1] "The picture of society that one gets at the close of the period (seventh century B.C.) is one of growing kingdoms side by side with powerful tribal organisations keeping their independence." Of the former, apart from Magadha, mention may be made of the kingdoms of Kausambi, Kosala, Avanti, etc. Of the non-monarchical, independent republics, the Lichchavis, the Mallas and others not so powerful and numerous as the Sakyas, deserve mention.

Available evidence does not give an exact idea of the extent of the various kingdoms or republics, or of the number of their population; the information available regarding the extant political institutions is also scant. It is clear, however, that a great religious discontent was prevalent at the time. More and more the Aryan *Rishis* isolated themselves from the people, took to *Aranyas* (i.e. forests) and practised *Tapasya* and *Yoga* and a high degree of asceticism.[2] Within the society, in the absence of religious leaders, spiritual bankruptcy ruled supreme, and in this void, the Brahmins, who constituted the priestly orders, acted in pursuit of their personal profits and fell from the high standards followed by those of their class who preceded them. They consequently became highly unpopular and there was a revulsion against them and what they stood for.

Rise Of Buddhism And Jainism

It was at this time that India witnessed the rise of two great religious reformers, Gautama Buddha and Mahavir. Apart from the widespread disavowal of Brahminical domination, their appearance also synchronises with the rise of the mercantile class (the *Shreshtin)* and industrial crafts.[3] Buddhism repudiated the prevalent ritualism and Brahminical domination, took a firm stand against racial privileges and expressed the common urge for peace and order out of chaos. The growing *Shreshtins,* the mercantile community, whose unfettered growth was prevented by the dominant Brahmins, lent their full support to the new reformers. It is apparent, however, and accepted by competent authorities that for

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[1] K. M. Panikkar : **A Survey of Indian History, Op. cit., p. 17.**

[2] Says K. M. Panikkar : "The *Yoga* of bodily austerities was a pre-Aryan spiritual discipline. Siva seated in the posture of a *Yogi*, which is one of the great discoveries at Mohenjo-Daro, and the stone image of a saint in *Yogic* contemplation are clear evidences that the doctrines of *Yoga* came from the Indus Valley Civilisation." (Op. cit., p. 19)

[3] **History and Culture of the Indian People, Vol. II. The Age of Imperial Unity, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, IInd Edition, 1953, p. 599.**

Buddhism as also Jainism, at the time of their inception, the masters had worked up their ideas on the basis of Upanishadic texts. They did not stand out as separate churches, as in later times. Buddhism, as K. M. Munshi has rightly observed, was "a protestant movement within the fold of *Dharma*."[1] Buddhism remained dominant in India for five hundred years, after which it was slowly and decisively absorbed back in Hinduism. The Hindus regard Buddha as one of the nine incarnations of the Almighty. As for Jainism, the Jainas believe in the existence of twenty-four *Tirthankaras* (i.e. ford-makers across the stream of existence). Historians, however, believe that the first twenty-two are mythical with no historical foundation. Parsva, and the last of the *Tirthankaras,* Mahavir, did exist. Mahavir is regarded more as a reformer of an existing religion or church than the founder of a new one. The spread of Jainism was more a case of successive migrations than of continuous expansion. It found its followers mainly among the new rich mercantile classes; and today also its followers are to be found mainly among the business communities.

Village, The Unchanging Backbone Of Indian Life

As we have already stated, Buddhism remained dominant in India for about 500 years, after which it decayed and was absorbed into Hinduism. And it may be noted that of the nearly 500 years of centralised regime out of 2,400 years of Indian history before the coming of the British, from 600 B.C. to 1800 A.D., the period of Buddhist domination may well envelop nearly half of it. Some of these, like Chandragupta (324-300 B.C.) and Ashoka (273-236 B.C.),[2] may be called as among the most efficient and centralised regimes India has seen. It is none of our purpose, however, to study the inter-relation between the rise of the new mercantile class at the time of the inception of Buddhism and the growth of the sprawling empires. Nor is it our purpose to study the vicissitudes and ups and downs of the empires which rose and fell in the course of the long march of Indian history. What we seek to point out is the fact that during all these years, from one end of India to the other, the village with little local variations remained the unchanging backbone of Indian life. "It is the one foundation on which every empire in India has been reared."[3]

Thus, for example, speaking of the villages in the area populated by the Sakyas, the clan from which Buddha came, which had Kapilvastu as its capital somewhere on the present borders of

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[1] Ibid, Foreword, p. XIV.

[2] Altekar puts these dates as follows: Chandragupta (320-295 B.C.), Ashoka (276-232 B.C.), vide **Pracheen Bharatiya Shasan Padhdhati**, Op. cit., Appendix 3.

[3] K. M. Panikkar : **A Survey of Indian History**, Op. cit., p. 9.

Gorakhpur district in Uttar Pradesh and Nepal, Rhys-Davids says :[1] "We hear of no crime, and there was not probably very much in the villages themselves—each of them a tiny self-governed republic." We are also told that the local affairs of each village were carried on in open assembly of the householders. These assemblies met in groves which were as much a feature of the village then as now.

Indian Villages In Buddhist Times

Indeed, glimpses of the agricultural system and references to the self-governing village communities are scattered all through Jain and Buddhist texts dating from 5th century B.C. The canonical books of the Buddhists elaborately refer to the arrangement of villages, towns and forts. *Gama, nigama, kula* and *nagaraka* are often mentioned. The Jain texts refer to settlements such as *ghosa, kheta, kharvata, gram, palli, pattana, samvaha, uagara, matamba,* etc.[2] The average village contemplated in the Buddhist *Jatakas* consisted of families numbering up to 1,000. The village dwellings were fairly close to one another, so much so that a fire starting in one might spread to the whole village.[3] The villages almost invariably had a gate, the *gram-dwara.* Beyond this used to be the village orchard, and then the *gram-kshetra,* that is the cultivated area of the village. Fences, snares and field-watchmen protected the crops from pests, beasts and birds. The *gram-kshetra* was extended, as and when need arose, by cleaning the forests. Beyond this arable area used to be the village pasture, which was invariably held in common, and the cattle of the king or the commoner, all had equal rights over it.[4] The *Jatakas* refer to *Gopalaka* (meaning "protector of the flocks"), a village official or employee, a sort of a common communal neatherd whose task was to pen the flocks at night or, in the alternative, return it to their owners by counting heads.

The cultivated area of the village consisted of individual holdings. It would appear that the demarcation of areas was done in a well-planned manner. There seems to have obtained a system of co-operative irrigation[5] and the water channels divided the holdings.[1] Rhys-Davids has also observed that the irrigation channels were laid by the community, the rows of boundaries were in fact the water channels, and the supply of water was regulated by rule, under the supervision of the headman.

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[1] T. W. Rhys-Davids : **Buddhist India,** First Indian Edition, Calcutta, 1950, p. 15.

[2] Radha Kumud Mookerji : **Hindu Civilisation,** Bombay, 1950; pp. 299-301.

[3] Says Rhys-Davids : "We nowhere hear of isolated houses. The houses were all together in a group, separated only by narrow lanes". (Op. cit., p. 33).

[4] Says Rhys-Davids : "The villages were grouped round the rice fields and their cattle wandered through the outlying forest, over which the peasantry had rights of common." (Op. cit., p. 14).

[5] *Jat.,* i, 336; iv, 167; v, 412. See also **Dhammapada**, v, 80, line 1 : **उदकं हि नयन्ति नेत्तिका.** It has been translated by Dr. Radhakrishnan thus: "Engineers (who build canals and aqueducts) lead the water (wherever they like)" **The Dhammapada** by S. Radhakrishnan, Oxford University Press, Second Impression, 1954; p. 85.

System Of Landholdings And Village Organisation: The Communal Concept

Let us now examine the system of landholdings and village organisation. The cultivated area of the village was divided into plots, each household in the village having an area assigned to it, the produce of which it enjoyed. But there existed no proprietary right as such. No one could sell or mortgage his share of the village land to an outsider. Rhys-Davids says that it was impossible for him to do so, at least without the consent of the village council. Nor could any head of the household bequeath his rights of cultivation over the plot cultivated by him according to his free choice, even with regard to deciding the shares of his own family. All such matters were settled by customary practices, coming down from Vedic times with very minor modifications, if any. The general sense of the community did not recognise the right of primogeniture. Customary practices, and the general sense of the community as to what was just and correct, decided all questions relating to land occupation. Most often, after the death of the head of the household, the family continued as before under the superintendence of the eldest son.

The communal concept was even more pronounced in the case of the village common—the grasslands and the forests. Grazing rights and the right to pick up fallen wood was free and unfettered. As Rhys-Davids has remarked: "No Individual could acquire, either by purchase or inheritance, any exclusive right in any portion of the common grassland or woodland. Great importance was attached to these rights of pasture and forestry."[2] Even when the king made a grant of some village to some priest, or some other dignitary, in effect it was not a conferment of free rights over village lands. This he simply could not do, he had no property in land. It was "but the tithe due, by custom, to the government as yearly tax. The peasantry was ousted from no one of their rights."[1]

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[1] The following remark of Dr. Radha Kumud Mookerji pertaining to these water-channels would be found interesting: "These dividing ditches, rectangular and curvilinear, which the Buddha saw among the cultivated fields of Magadha suggested to his mind the pattern of his monk's uniform, a patchwork of torn pieces of cast-off clothings." (*Vinay* Texts, ii, 207-9). Quoted from article entitled "Agriculture in Buddhist India" in **A.I.C.C. Economic Review**, Vol. VII No. 8-9, Whole No. 129-130, Independence Anniversary Special, dated Aug. 15, 1955, **p. 52.**

[2] **Buddhist India**, Op. cit., p. 35.

The size of the cultivated holding with each household used to be what may today be called a family holding, that is manageable by the family, though sometimes hired labour *(bhatika)* was employed.[2] Forced labour, of course, was unknown.[3] In connection with the employment of hired labour for household agriculture, the following remarks of Dr. Radha Kumud Mookerji are of the greatest importance : "The ideal was the landlord not divorced from his land but cultivating it himself. A social stigma attached to the 'hireling,' who is ranked below the slave *(Digha*, i, 51; *Anga*, i, 145,206; *Milinda*, 147,337). The sorry spectacle of sturdy peasants leaving at home their own empty barns and toiling as hirelings on the estates of the royal capitalist is deplored as a system of social decadence in the *Jataka* (i, 339)."[4]

Village Officials: Taxation: *Shrama-Dan*

It is thus clear that during Buddhist times, the village communities were supreme in the village, with the fullest enjoyment of rights over land, the only limiting factor being the payment of demands of the State. This demand was in the form of a title on raw produce which used to be realised in kind on the threshing floor. Very often an official, called the *Mahamatra*, fixed the State share by a survey of the standing crops. Sometimes the village syndic or headman, called the *Grambhojaka*, himself measured out the State's share. This share of the State, called the *Bhaga*, was in accordance with the prevalent customs and dictates of the Hindu law-books, such as *Manu-Smriti*, and varied from one-sixth to one-twelfth of the produce. The governing authorities, no doubt, did decide this share, but the decision invariably was in accordance with customary practices. Besides this *Bhaga*, there were some other imposts on the village under the generic term *Bali*. Sometimes there used to be a special levy on produce by the State, in order to fully provision the State granary against emergencies, like war or famine. Over and above this, there seemed to prevail a system of contribution of labour, something like the current

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[1] Ibid, p. 35.

[2] *Jat.*, i, 277; iii, 162; iv, 167.

[3] Rhys-Davids : **Buddhist India**, Op. cit., p. 36.

[4] Quoted from article in A.I.C.C. Economic Review, Vol. VII, No. 8-9, Op. cit Rhys-Davids also says : "They held it degradation, to which only dire misfortune could drive them, to work for hire."

Shrama-Dan (labour gift) practice in post-Independence India.[1] This *Shrama-Dan* was apparently for village self-help, but instances are also noticed of peasants summoned from their work to beat up game for the king and provide deer-preserves for him.[2] Rhys-Davids refers to villagers uniting, of their own accord, to build mote-halls, rest-houses and reservoirs, to mend the roads between their own and adjacent villages, and to lay out parks. And in such works of public utility, the women-folk were proud to take part.

In this community of small peasant cultivators of economic holdings, there was security and independence, and enough was produced to fulfil all their needs and leave a surplus besides. The population then was sparse,[3] there was an abundance of land as distinct from the high pressure upon land these days, and though the literature of the times refers to the existence of large estates formed by Brahmins,[4] there were no landlords and paupers, the ignoble sight which disfigures our countryside today. Constituting 80 per cent of the population, and none very rich, and very few, if any, poor, these village folk, as distinct from the priests, kings, soldiers and mendicants, lived "pleased one with another and happy, dancing their children in their hands, dwelt with open doors."[5]

Within the village, these settled communities had a highly developed social organisation, patterned more or less on the same lines as the villages in Vedic times. To quote Rhys-Davids again:[6] "They were proud of their standing, their family and their village. And they were governed by headmen of their own class and village, very probably selected by themselves, in accordance with their own customs and ideals."

Under Jainism

In our description of the village systems of the period, we have mainly confined ourselves to the state of affairs as revealed in

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[1] The great historian of ancient India, Dr. Radha Kumud Mookerji, told the author, when we were together visiting the famous and sacred Meenakshi temple in Madurai, South India, in September 1955, that the practice of *Shrama-Dan* was prevalent in ancient times, and he pointed to a painting on the temple walls, wherein Lord Shiva, with a basket of earth on his head and followed by a number of men was filling up a cavity. See also article by Dr. Mookerji entitled "*Shramadan* in Ancient India" in **A.I.C.C. Economic Review**, Vol. VII, No. 19-20, Whole No. 140-141, dated February 11, 1956, Amritsar Session Special; pp 35-36.

[2] *Jat.*, i, 149; iii, 270.

[3] Rhys-Davids estimates (very roughly though) that the total inhabitants in Northern India in the seventh century B.C. numbered from fifteen to twenty million.

[4] Dr. Radha Kumud Mookerji refers to estates of 1,000 *Karisas* (probably acres) and more, and to one estate requiring for its cultivation as much as 500 ploughs with hired labourers to ply plough and oxen (Vide **A.-I.C.C. Economic Review**, Vol. VII, No. 8-9, Op. cit.)

[5] **Dialogues of the Buddha**, i-176.

[6] **Buddhist India**, Op. cit., p. 37.

Buddhist texts, but this does not by any means belittle the importance of Jain texts and the valuable information contained therein. Jainism, contemporary of Buddhism, and like Buddhism, was essentially a religion based on human brotherhood and equality. As Sarat Chandra Ghoshal, the General Editor of the monumental series, *The Sacred Books of the Jainas* has remarked: "Jainism is one of the oldest religions of India whose votaries in the past ranked from the prince to the peasant, exercising a noble influence in placing all beings on the same sacred status by unfurling the banner of peace and universal brotherhood, under which they were called to assemble."[1] Ranjan Surideva, in an article on Panchayats in Jain Period has rightly remarked : *"Sarve Varnah Saman Manarha* (*i.e.* equality of all) is the basic principle of Panchayats in the Jain period."[2] The democratic content in the teachings of Mahavir *Tirthankar* is clearly borne out by his various discourses. In *Vyavahar-Uddeshak,* for example, he clearly enjoins the election of his successors by a convened assembly. His *Shramana Sangha,* like the *Samgha* of Buddha, was essentially democratic.[3] The existence of *Janapadas* and the great deal of trade carried on by them, as revealed in Jain canonical literature, is discussed in a very learned and original study by Dr. Motichandra,[4] which describes the various travel methods and trade routes of ancient India.

Rise Of The Mauryas: Kautilya's *Artha-Shastra*

According to Jain and Buddhist traditions, Buddha and Mahavir died within a few years of each other. There are controversies about their date of death.[5] According to Sinhalese reckoning of the *Nirvana* era, Buddha died in 544 B.C. but the Chinese (Canton) tradition of 'the dotted record' puts it at 486 B.C. According to Jain tradition, Mahavir died in 528 B.C. Most scholars, however, now accept 468 B.C. as the death year of Mahavir and 486 B.C. (or thereabouts) as that of Buddha. Howsoever it be, what is important from the point of view of our study is the fact that within a century of these dates we have in India the administration of the Mauryas about which we have definite and full knowledge, thanks to the great work of Kautilya, the *Artha-Shastra.* Our knowledge of the administrative systems before this is based upon inferences drawn from the *Jatakas* and a host of canonical and other literature.[1] As such, no definite outline can be drawn up with finality. Thus, for example, the Pali *Mahavagga* speaks of 80,000 townships at the time of Bimbisara, and of an assembly attended by their *gramikas,* that is their overseers. One may be sceptical about the number, but the conclusion nevertheless is inescapable that villages were the most important unit in the administrative structure, which was undoubtedly based upon democratic principles. And the late Dr. Beni Prasad has remarked:[2] "The system sketched in the *Dharma-Sutras*. . . .formed the basis of administration. . .and gradually developed into the highly elaborate structure of the Mauryan period."

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[1] **The Sacred Books of the Jainas (Original Texts and Commentaries), Vol. I, Dravya-Samgraha** by Sarat Chandra Ghoshal, published by Central Jaina Publishing House, Arrah, 1917, Preface, p. ix.

[2] See **Panchayat Sandesh,** monthly Hindi journal of Bihar Rajya Panchayat Parishad, article entitled "Jainkal Men Panchayat Raj" (that is, Panchayats during Jain period), Vol. I, No. 1., April, 1955, p. 35-37.

[3] We regret we cannot prolong this discussion further. For those interested we would refer to two works : **India as Described in Early Texts of Buddhism and Jainism** by Dr. B. C. Law, and **Life in Ancient India as Depicted by Jain Canons** by Jagdish Chandra Jain (Bombay, 1947).

[4] See **Sarthvah : Pracheen Bharat Ki Path-Paddhati** (in Hindi) by Dr. Motichandra, Published by Bihar Rashtrabhasha Parishad, Patna, 1953, Chapter IX, entitled "Jain Sahitya Men Yatri aur Sarthvah", pp. 162-174.

[5] **History and Culture of the Indian People, Vol. II., The Age of Imperial Unity,** Op. cit., pp. 36-37.

And so we shall now briefly describe the village system and administration as revealed in Kautilya's epoch-making *Artha-Shastra.* The entire administrative system was itself moulded by the needs of agriculture. Villages were of prescribed size ranging from 100 to 500 families.[3] Kautilya's conception of village boundary is identical with the ideas of Manu (See Ch. II). Kautilya said that village boundaries should be demarcated by river, hill, forest, ditches, tanks, *bunds* and trees of various descriptions.[4] Further, the villages should be situated at distances of one or two

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[1] There are controversies again about the dates of literature coming down to us from ancient India. Dr. Altekar has given a comprehensive list and their dates and we reproduce the more important of these below :

Rig-Veda period	2500-1500 B.C.	(Appr.)
Atharva-Veda	2000 B.C.	(,,)
The Brahamanas	1500-800 B.C.	(,,)
Upanishad period	1000-600 B.C.	(,,)
The Dharma-Sutras	600-200 B.C.	(,,)
The Jatakas	500 B.C.	(,,)
The Mahabharata War	1400 B.C.	(,,)
Mahabharata Composition	300 B.C.	(,,)
Kautilya's *Artha-Shastra*	300 B.C.	
Patanjali	150 B.C.	(Appr.)
Manu-Smriti Composition	100 B.C.	(,,)
Ramayana Composition	50 B.C.	(,,)
Yajnavalkya-Smriti	200 A.D.	
Narada-Smriti	500 A.D.	(Appr.)
The *Purana* period	400-800 A.D.	(,,)
Shukra-Nitisar	800 A.D.	(,,)
Barhaspatya Arthashastra	800 A.D.	(,,)

(From **Pracheen Bharatiya Shasan Padhdhati**, Op. cit., Appendix 3.)

[2] **History and Culture of the Indian People, Vol II; The Age of Imperial Unity,** Op. cit., p. 326.

[3] कुलशतावरं पञ्चशतकुलपरं **[Artha-Shastra].**

[4] नदीशैलवनगृष्टिदरीसेतु बन्धशाल्मलीशमी क्षीरवृक्षानन्तेषु सीमां स्थापयेत् ।।
[Artha-Shastra].

Krosha (1 *Krosha* = 2 mls.) so that in times of need one village may go to the help of another.[1] The villages were organised under unions of 10 called *Samgrahana,* of 200 called *Karvatika,* of 400 called *Dronamukha,* and of 800 villages constituting a *Mahagrama,* and administratively termed *Sthatnuja* (from whence probably comes the modern term *Thana,* that is the jurisdiction of a Police Station). The *Sthatnuja* then, as now, was a centre of trade and fairs of the neighbourhood villages.

The Villages: Administrative Staff: Rules For Agricultural Promotion

The village administrative staff comprised (i) the *Adhyaksha* (i.e. the Headman); (ii) the *Samkhayaka* (i.e. the Accountant); (iii) the *Sthanikas* (village officials of different grades); (iv) *Anikastha* (veterinary doctors); (v) *Jamgha Karika* (village couriers). Besides these, there used to be an officer to look after village sanitation *(Chikitsaka)* and a horse-trainer *(Ashwa-Damak)* with a view to build up a cavalry for needs of war. These were granted land free of rents and taxes, but they were forbidden to alienate it by sale or mortgage.

Kautilya makes mention of set rules for the promotion of agricultural welfare. Rent on land was settled in accordance with custom, and seeds, cattle and cash were granted to encourage cultivation. If a peasant brought virgin land under cultivation, he was settled on it for life for a quit rent. The State directed that forests be planted to yield fire-wood as well as valuable and medicinal woods. Attention was given to plantation of forests for rearing elephants, which then formed an important wing of the army. Provision had to be made for ample pasture for cattle, construction and maintenance of roads and pathways, and markets for commodities carried both by land and water. An important duty was provision for rural water supply by construction of *Setu* (reservoirs). Water was supplied to them from rivers or by rains. Persons desiring to construct tanks as charity were granted free land and other necessary aids. Similar facilities were given to those wishing to construct rest-houses or places of worship.[2]

In Chandragupta's time, the villages were divided into three categories according to their population : *Jyeshtha* or the biggest one, *Madhyama* or the middling ones, and *Kanishtha* or the smaller ones. These, in turn, were divided into four categories for purposes of State revenue,[1] as enumerated below. First were the *Gramagras*, or ordinary villages, paying the usual revenues. Then came the *Pariharak* villages, which were revenue-free. These were given to priests and teachers, who were entitled to collect the State's demands and use it themselves, not being required to pay anything to the State. In turn they had the obligation to spread education and otherwise help the people in the pursuits of *Dharma,* and this revenue grant was in the form of their salary. Then were the *Ayudhuja* villages, which were revenue-free by virtue of the fact that they supplied ready soldiers for the army in times of war. Lastly were villages which paid taxes in kind, not in cash, in the form of agricultural produce, animals, forest products, gold, silver. pearls, corals, conch-shells and minerals extracted from earth, and in labour.

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[1] ग्रामं क्रोश द्विक्रोश सीमान मन्योन्यारक्षंनिवेशयेत् [Artha-Shastra]

[2] राजा देशहितान् सेतून् कुर्वतां पथि सङ्क्रमात् ।
ग्रामशोभाश्च रक्षाश्च तेषां प्रियहितं चरेत् ।। [Artha-Shastra]

State Taxes

It may be mentioned that the State at this time held considerable areas, akin to what may be called *Khas Mahal* lands. This was called *Sita,* and a special officer, the *Sitadhyaksha,* was appointed to look after its cultivation through hired labourers or on crop-share. Besides cultivation of agricultural crops, the *Sitadhyaksha* had to see to the cultivation of special crops like herbs and roots, fibre-producing plants (*Kshauma*), cotton (*Karpasa*), etc. This then was an important source of State revenue. Besides this, and the income from minerals and forests, other sources of rural revenue may be recounted as under :

(i) *Bhaga,* or the sixth part of agricultural produce payable to the State;
(ii) *Kara,* or the levy of an impost upon the yield of orchards;
(iii) *Vivita,* or a levy on pastures;
(iv) *Vartani,* or a road-cess;
(v) *Rajju,* or the cess payable for settlement;
(vi) *Chora-rajju,* or *chowkidari* or Police tax.

We hasten to submit that what we have said above is hardly the barest outline of agricultural organisation and village and revenue system as described in Kautilya's masterly work. Of the prosperity, affluence and general well-being that was the dominant feature of India at the time, which excited the cupidity of invaders, many contemporary visitors to India from foreign countries have spoken in no uncertain terms, and history books are full of them. We will not prolong our description by references to them. What we would point out, however, is the fact that this elaborate agricultural, village and revenue system, and this great prosperity and affluence flowed from, and was essentially based upon the self-governing village communities.

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[1] समाहर्त्ता चतुर्धा जनपदं विभज्य ज्येष्ठमध्यमकनिष्ठविभागेन ग्रामाग्रं परिहारकमायुधीयं धान्यपशु हिरण्य कुप्यविष्टि (कर) प्रतिकरं इदमेतावदिति निबन्धयेत्।
[Artha-Shastra]

The Self-governing Village Republics

Dr. Satyaketu Vidyalankar, a veteran Hindi scholar and writer of many learned historical treatises in Hindi says :[1] "Though Samrat Chandragupta founded a huge empire and established a centralised government in India, he followed a policy of non-interference towards these ancient village communities. Suffice it to say that every village was absolutely free in all matters relating to itself, and it was self-governed. Every village had its own *Sabha* (assembly), which debated all matters relating to the village, rules helpful to the entire community were framed, and the offenders were punished through regular trials and judgements. The *Sabha* was the centre of the multifarious activities of the village. It discussed religious and social matters. It arranged numerous types of entertainments for the village inhabitants. The *Sabha* met under a shady tree, over a specially constructed mound *(chabutara)*. Representatives of village families, the elders, and other experienced folk gathered there. Whoever may be the ruler of the country, it mattered very little to these village folk. They were ruled by their own *Sabha*—their own village body. The Indian people lived independently in these self-governing village republics."

Functioning Of The Village Communities

The *Artha-Shastra* provides penetrating insight into the organisation and functioning of these village communities. It enjoins : "When the *Gramik* (that is the village *Adhyaksha* or headman) goes out for any work relating to the entire village, village inhabitants should accompany him by turns. Those who refuse should be fined at the rate of 1½ *Panas* (a current coin—*author*) for each Yojana (covered by the *Gramik*)."[2] Furthermore, the *Gramik* is authorised to extern from the village thieves and corrupt people and fine them. In case, however, and this is important, the entire village combines to extern an innocent man, then the whole village be fined.[1] There apparently was a regular village fund and the fines imposed and collected were given to this fund. Kautilya has directed:[2] "A peasant who is allotted land for cultivation in the village but fails to cultivate it, should be fined and the amount credited to the village fund. If he takes a loan for cultivation needs and fails to do anything, then thrice the amount advanced should be realised from him as fine, etc." Similar other injunctions abound in *Artha-Shastra*.

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[1] Satyaketu Vidyalankar : **Maurya Samrajya Ka Itihas** (i.e. History of the Mauryan Empire), published by Indian Press, Allahabad, 1928; p. 210-211. To all students of Indian history we would strongly recommend this scholarly study of 713 pages, to which the late Dr. K. P. Jayaswal has written a highly appreciative foreword.

[2] ग्रामार्थेन ग्रामिकं व्रजन्तं उपवासाः पर्यायेण अनुगच्छेयुः अननुगच्छन्तः पणार्धपणिकं योजनं दद्यः । [Artha-Shastra].

The key figure, obviously, in this structure was the *Gramik*, the village headman. He was a State employee, but his appointment was dependent on the choice of the village. He had the authority to enforce accepted practices upon the village, but, by and large, he had to work in co-operation with the village community. The very fact that he, and the village itself, could be punished shows the overriding authority of the village body, and at the same time the existence of higher authorities which supervised its functions and could at times effectively intervene in its affairs. The village body also had judicial functions. Dr. Satyaketu Vidyalankar says:[3] "The independent village organisation was vested with powers of administration as well as of framing rules. It also carried on judicial functions. The rules framed by any village body were respectfully viewed at higher local courts." Kautilya also has directed that the rules framed by such local *Samghas*, variously called the *Desh-Samgha, Jati-Samgha* or the *Kul-Samgha*, should be respected.[4] That the State, in practice, recognised the rules framed by the village bodies is proved by another directive of Kautilya whereunder the head of the *Akshapatal* (most likely an administrative area) is directed to duly register all the rules framed by local bodies in the area.[5]

The *Gopa*

Besides the *Gramik, Gopa* was another officer of paramount importance in the village system of the times. In the discussions that have centred round the revival of the Panchayat system in post-Independence India, the creation of intermediate units between the village body and the district headquarters has of late received considerable attention. The Report of the Congress Village Panchayat Committee has given deep thought to this question.[1] The *Gopa* in Kautilya's treatise seems to have been performing some such intermediate-level function. The *Gopa* was expected to supervise the administration of 5 to 10 villages,[2] though in the case of smaller villages the number could go up to 20 and even 40. One of his chief assignments was to see to the regular collection of State revenues. Among other tasks assigned to him by Kautilya, the following may be mentioned :

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[1] ग्रामिकस्य ग्रामादस्तेन पारदारं निरस्यतः चतुर्विंशति पणोदंडः । ग्रामस्योत्तमः । [Artha-Shastra].

[2] कर्षकस्य ग्राममभ्युपेत्य अकुर्वतो ग्राम एवात्ययं हरेत् । कर्माकरणे कर्मवेतनद्विगुणं हिरण्यदानं प्रत्यशाद्विगुणं भक्ष्यपेयदाने च प्रवहणेषु द्विगुणमंशंदध्यात ।। (Ibid)

[3] Maurya Samrajya Ka Itihas, Op. cit., p. 212.

[4] तेन देशजातिकुलसंघानांसमयस्य अनपाकर्म व्याख्यातम् । [Artha-Shastra].

[5] देशग्रामजातिकुलसंघानां धर्म-व्यवहार चरित्र संस्थानं निबन्धपुस्तकस्थं कारयेत् । (Ibid)

(i) To settle boundary disputes between villages;
(ii) To keep a record of land utilisation in the villages, that is, lands cultivated and uncultivated, pastures fallow land, those under forests, orchards, vegetables, commercial crops, etc., as also a record of temples, tanks, cremation grounds, water channels, pathways, rest houses, etc.
(iii) To keep a record of land sales and transfers;
(iv) To record revenue-free lands and villages;
(v) To record the type and quantum of State aid to individuals and institutions;
(vi) To maintain population census, occupation-wise, of each village;
(vii) To maintain cattle census of each village;
(viii) To maintain a record of gold and other minerals, other cesses, dues and fines, as also voluntary labour-gifts, received from each village;
(ix) To maintain a list of artisans and craftsmen and women in each village;
(x) To keep a record of males and females, and old and young in each village, as also their income, profession, etc.

Sanitation And Hygiene

Before concluding our description of the village system in Kautilya's times, we would like to refer to two other important features. The attention that was given to village sanitation at this period is indeed amazing. We have already referred above to the existence of the village *Chikitsaka* responsible for village health and sanitation. The *Artha-Shastra* lays down stringent rules for the punishment of persons defying sanitation rules. In refreshing contrast to indiscriminate scattering of house-waste today, the *Artha-Shastra* directs that any person throwing his house-waste in village lanes should be fined one-eight of a *Pana*[1], one throwing water and mud in village lanes be fined one-quarter of a *Pana*.[2] People committing nuisance on highways, in *Dharmashalas* (i.e. rest-houses), places of pilgrimage and other sacred places, near water reservoirs, or temples, or government offices were also to be fined one *Pana* or more, in arithmetic progression.[3] Kautilya, however, was considerate towards persons who may be compelled to the act by virtue of taking some medicine, or disease or through fear.[4]

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[1] Report of the Congress Village Panchayat Committee, Op. cit. See Chapter X, entitled "Intermediate Units."

[2] तत्प्रदिष्टः पंचग्रामीं दशग्रामीं वा गोपश्चिन्तयेत् । [Artha-Shastra].

Compulsory *Shrama-Dan*

The second feature of village life at this time is the organisation and enforcement by the State of a system of "stipulated contributions in the shape of labour and bullocks towards any co-operative undertaking decided on by the village."[5] Apparently the State also contributed its share in such co-operative efforts. Such efforts succeeded because the roots of their success lay in the economic, civic and cultural life promoted by the village community, in the sharp and decisive prevention of all activities prejudicial to economic and moral welfare of the village, and in the general prevalence of a just agrarian system whereunder exploitation of one member of the community by another was practically non-existent.

Indian Village Communities Through The Centuries: Adjustments And Modifications

Such, in brief, was our Village Panchayat organisation 2,300 years ago, in third century B.C. And be it noted that this itself was simply the continuation of a system coming down from Vedic times, though every successive century did witness adjustments and modifications, almost always for the better, till about 1800 A.D., when the British came and mercilessly destroyed them. Village communities in India, as elsewhere, grew out of the unsettled and inchoate conditions of early tribes and their forms of social organisation.

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[1] पांसुन्यासे रथ्यायामष्टभागो दण्डः । [Artha-Shastra].

[2] पंकोदकसंनिरोधेपादः । (Ibid)

[3] राजमार्गेद्विगुणः ॥ पुण्यस्थानोदकस्थानदेवगृहराजपरिग्रहेषु पणोत्तरा विष्टादण्डाः । (Ibid)

[4] भैषज्यव्याधिभयनिमित्तमदण्डयाः ॥ (Ibid)

[5] See article by Dr. Radha Kumud Mookerji entitled "Agricultural Planning in Ancient India," **A.I.C.C. Economic Review**, Vol. V, No. 2, Whole No. 84, dated Oct. 1, 1953; p. 5.

Beyond this, however, Indian village communities stand but little comparison with those of most other countries. In India, the village bodies came into existence the earliest, and even at this early stage developed a high degree of organised functioning, and came to be the real base upon which our great ancient culture grew and prospered. This village system "was a mixture of the old Dravidian village and the new Aryan ideas."[1] The Indian institution developed along distinctive lines with differentiated structures and functions. Manu[2] was the first law-giver for these institutions. His basic ideas gave continuity to the social order, which in its turn absorbed new ideas and altered usages to make them suitable to changing conditions. The lead for such absorption, and suitable expansion and modification came from a number of subsequent commentators, but as Henry Sumner Maine has remarked :[3] "......each of them leaves in the law after he has expanded it, a stronger dose of common sense and a larger dose of equity and reasonableness than he found in it as it came from the hands of his predecessors."

In course of time, Yajnavalkya and other commentators laid down set rules for succession, inter-marriage, property in joint families and its division, etc., but strange as it may seem, no specific and clear-cut laws as such were laid down relating to the most important aspect of human life in India, namely, the tenure of land and the rights of various peoples engaged in cultivation. Not that the need for such laws or rules may never have been felt. On the contrary, the elaborate system of agriculture we have just described in the Mauryan times, which again was simply the continuation, most certainly on a higher level, of the systems which prevailed earlier, could not have been possible without set tenurial rules and practices in the village. The conclusion, therefore, is inescapable that land use and land-relationships were based on well-laid down usages and customs, which had, from immemorial times, dug deep roots among the people and were regarded as natural and obligatory. That it continued for centuries on end speaks volumes about its essential equity and justness. The Western intellectual, when he first came to know of it, was stupefied and amazed. Maine refers to this phenomenon of[1] "the preservation, during a number of centuries which it would be vain to calculate, of this great body of unwritten custom, differing locally in detail, but connected by common general features." This usage and custom was carefully observed and respected not only by the people, but by the State. When, in fact, the British conquerors stopped respecting it, and in their greed for revenue made short shrift of it, that made all the difference in India.

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[1] Jawaharlal Nehru : **Glimpses of World History**, Op. cit., p. 24. The following brief summary of this village system by Nehru would be found useful : "These villages were almost independent and were governed by their elected Panchayats. A number of villages or small towns were joined together under a *raja* or chief who was sometimes elected and sometimes hereditary. Often different village groups co-operated with each other in order to build roads, rest-houses, canals for irrigation, and such like communal things which were for common good. It appears that the *raja*, who was the chief man in his state, could not do just what he liked. He was himself subject to Aryan laws and customs, and he could be deposed or fined by his people. There was no such thing as *L'etat c'est moi*.... Thus there was a kind of democracy in the Aryan settlements—that is to say, the Aryan inhabitants could to some extent control the government"

[2] Manu's ideas were harmonised and elaborated in *Manu-Smriti*, a work believed to date back not beyond 100 or 200 B.C. Manu, however, is believed to have existed and taught centuries before. He, in fact, is regarded as the first man. Late Jayashankar Prasad, one of the greatest litterateurs of modern Hindi, in his epic and immortal poem **Kamayini**, has painted him as the solitary living being sitting on top of the Himalayas, when the whole world was inundated with flood waters.

[3] Henry Sumner Maine: **Village Communities in the East and the West**, Op. cit. p. 47

The *Shukra-Nitisar*

We shall, however, have more to say about this and other aspects of our village communities in subsequent chapters. That these customs and usages continued in India right up to the period of Turkish and Afghan invasions is incontrovertibly established by another historic and famous Sanskrit work, which has come down to us like the *Artha-Shastra,* and which gives a vivid picture of Indian polity, and specially its village system, on the eve of these invasions. It is the *Shukra-Nitisar,*[2] believed to be the work of Shukracharya. Modelled on the lines of Kautilya's *Artha-Shastra,* and undoubtedly largely influenced by it, it describes the structure of the State power, the rules of appointments, the functions of the council of ministers and its selections, appointment, duties and obligations of the State official, the judicial system, the State finances, the army and arts of war and the organisation and function of local bodies in cities and villages.

The Villages: Village Habitation

We will now briefly describe the village system as revealed in *Shukra-Nitisar.*[3] One of the primary duties of the king, as laid down by this work, is to keep himself informed of the conditions of the people in the villages and protect them, to find out the extent to which the people are benefited by the work of the State employees, as also to learn of those people who have suffered due to the officials.[1] Like the *Jyeshtha, Madhyama* and *Kanishtha* villages in *Artha-Shastra,* Shukra also mentions three types of villages according to their size, the *Kumbha, Palli* and *Gram. Kumbha* was one-quarter of the size of a village and one-half that of the *Palli. Palli* was half the size of the *Gram.*[2] *Gram* thus was the biggest in size and its jurisdiction extended to area of one *Krosha* all round it, and was required to pay 1,000 *karshas* (a silver coin) to the State as its dues.[3]

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[1] Ibid; p. 55.

[2] There are controversies about the authorship of the work. Shukra was a great *Rishi* in Vedic times, and that seems to create considerable confusion. The work is not certainly of this Shukra, else it would have been noticed centuries earlier. May be someone by the name of Shukracharya wrote it in 9th or 10th Century A.D. There are controversies about its date as well; Dr. Altekar, for example, accepts 800 A.D., whereas Nehru in his **Discovery of India** regards it a work of 10th century A.D. There are other views as well. May be someone undertook the task of compiling the current polity in Sanskrit and dedicated it to Shukra.

[3] We would here take the liberty of bringing to the notice of the reader a profound study of this work by Dr. Shyam Lal Pandeya of Lucknow University entitled **Shukra Ki Rajniti,** (published by Prem Publishers, Lucknow, 1952; pages 324). Dr. Pandeya's study (in Hindi) is a testimony to his erudition, and his command over original Sanskrit texts. Alongwith **Shukra-Nitisar's** ideas, he has given comparative references from the ancient-most Sanskrit works, and we regret this great study does not appear to be widely known. In our description of the village system as revealed in **Shukra-Nitisar,** we would like to acknowledge our gratitude to Dr. Pandeya.

Shukra-Nitisar gives a most exhaustive account of the types of houses in the village, providing rooms, verandahs, adequate ventilation, etc. The whole scheme of village habitation is based upon a highly developed sense of hygiene and sanitation, as also to facilitate village defence, agriculture and trade. Thus, it is directed that village houses should be in one row on two sides of the village path, which should have a width of ten *Hath* (i.e. about ten feet), and which should be higher at the centre like the back of a tortoise, so that rain water may easily flow off through water *nalis* constructed at the edges of the pathway.[4] There are many other details provided.

Village Defence: Care For Travellers' Comforts

Shukra's description of village habitation reveals that village defence was given great attention in those times. Apparently the villages had some sort of a boundary wall, and it is directed that doors for entry in the village should be to the east and the north. It is further directed that watchmen (*Yamiks*) should stand guard at night at the entrance of each village path and should once make round of it each one and a half hours so as to frighten away the thieves, etc.[1] This *Yamik* was paid out of contributions from the two rows of houses on that path.[2] People coming to the village from outside were duly checked.

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[1] ग्रामान्पुराणि देशांश्चस्वयं संवीक्ष्यवत्सरे ।
अधिकारि गणैः काश्चरंजिताः काश्च कर्षिताः ।। [Shukra-Nitisar, 1|373]

[2] पल्ल्यर्धं कुंभसंज्ञकम् ।। ग्रामार्धकं पल्लि संज्ञं ।। (Ibid, 1|192).

[3] भवेत्क्रोशात्मकोग्रामो रुप्यकर्ष सहस्रकः ।। (Ibid, 1|92).
A *Krosha,* called *kos* now, was then apparently something more than the two miles in the *Kos* of today.

[4] पंक्तिद्वयगतानांहिगेहानां कारयेत् ।। दशहस्तात्मकं नित्यं ग्रामेग्रामे नियोजयेत् ।।
कूर्मपृष्ठामार्गभूमिः कार्या ग्राम्यैः सुसेतुका ।। कुर्यान्मार्गान्पार्श्वे खातान्निर्गमार्थं जलस्य च ।।
(Ibid, 1|264, 1|265, 1|267)

Special care was devoted to provide for the comforts of travellers. One rest-house or *Panthshala* was provided between two villages. A special village official, the *Gramapa,* was given the task of supervising the upkeep of the *Panthshalas* which had besides a manager, the *Panthashaladhipati.*[3] His duties and tasks are enumerated in detail in *Shukra-Nitisar,* as also rules for those who sought rest in *Panthshalas.* Safety on the roads and the protection of travellers from dacoits and wanderers was given due attention. *Gramya-Janas* (akin to *Chowkidars*) watched the roads, and to meet the expenses involved in maintaining safety on the roads, a special tax was levied.[4]

The Village Officials

Numerous other details regarding village life, its upkeep, etc., are to be found in the treatise. Thus, for example, an exhaustive list is given of trees which should be planted in the villages and on the roads, and the methods of planting them. The *Van-Mahotsavas* of today are, therefore, nothing new in India. But we shall rather not go into all these details. What is clear, however, is the fact that all this village planning, management and maintenance could not be possible without a well-functioning village organisation. And so we shall now turn our attention to the system of village organisation as revealed in *Shukra-Nitisar.* Six village officials are mentioned: the *Sahasadhipati,* the *Gramneta* (also called the *Gramap*), the *Bhaghara,* the *Lekhak*, the *Shulka-Grahak* and the *Pratihara.*[5]

The *Sahasadhipati,* apparently, was responsible for judicial functions of the village. He had to settle village disputes and punish the offenders. By virtue of his powers to punish (*Danda*), he has been also called the *Danda-Vidhayaka* in *Sukra-Nitisar.* He was required to so punish as not to destroy the *Praja* (i.e. the people), not to be too harsh, nor too lenient.[1]

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[1] वीथि वीथिषु यामार्धेनिशिपर्यटनंसदा॥ कर्त्तव्यं यामिकैरेवं चौर जार निवृत्तये ।
(Ibid, 1|291, 1|292).

[2] तैस्तद्वृत्तं तु शृणुयाद्गृहस्थ भृति पोषितैः ॥ (Ibid, 1|289).

[3] ग्राम द्वियां तरे चैव पान्थशालाः प्रकल्पयेत् ॥
नित्यं संमार्जिताम् चैव ग्रामपैश्चसु गोपिताम् ॥
तत्रागतं तु संप्रच्छेत्पान्थं शालाधिपैः सदा ॥ (Ibid, 1|268, 1|269).

[4] मार्गसंस्काररक्षार्थं मार्गगेभ्योहरेत्फलम् ॥ (Ibid, 4|240).

[5] साहसाधिपति चैव ग्रामनेतारमेव च। भागहारं तृतीयं तु लेखकं च चतुर्थकम्।
(Ibid, 2|120).

Though it is not clearly mentioned, the *Gramneta,* and the *Gramap,* both referred to in *Shukra-Nitisar,* are the names of one and the same official. And he was assigned a most important duty. His task was to see that the people are protected from thieves and robbers, as also the excesses of the State officials,[2] in the same manner as parents protect their children. His another important job was to ensure the safe deposit of State's revenues in the village. His responsibility was to see that the dues collected from the village was safely deposited at the house of some well-to-do man of the village.[3] From the amounts thus collected from month to month and season to season, the different officials were paid one-sixteenth, one-twelfth, one-tenth, one-eighth, etc., according as previously decided, and the *Gramap* got one-sixth of the land revenue.[4]

The *Bhaghara* and the *Shulka-Grahak* had the task of collecting State dues, the former the land revenue, and the latter taxes from the traders. The *Bhaghara* was directed to collect land revenue like the gardener who gives all care to the proper maintenance and health of the trees and then gathers the fruits.[5] Similarly, the *Shulka-Grahak* (also called the *Shaulkik*) was directed to so gather the taxes as not to harm the investment capital of the trader.[6]

The *Lekhak* was the village scribe. He was required to note all matters relating to village administration as also to keep the record of income and expenses. His qualifications are mentioned : he should be well in arithmetic, should know the languages and should have a good handwriting.[7]

The *Pratihar* was required to be of good physique, free from laziness, and well-versed in the use of arms. His main job was to summon people, albeit courteously, when required by the village officials.[1]

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[1] प्रजा नष्टानहि भवेत्तथा दंडविधायकः। नातिक्रूरो नातिमृदुः साहसाधिपतिश्चसः ।। (Ibid, 2|169, 2|170).

[2] आधर्षकेभ्यश्चोरेभ्यो ह्यधिकारिगणात्त था ।। प्रजा संरक्षणेदक्षो ग्रामपो मातृपितृवत् ।। (Ibid, 2|170, 2|171).

[3] नियभ्यग्राम भूभागमेकस्माद्धनिकाद्धरेत् ।। (Ibid, 4|235).

[4] गृहीत्वा तत्प्रतिभुवं धनं प्राक्तत्समंतुना। विभागशो गृहीत्वापि मासिमासि ऋतौ ऋतौ ।। षोडशद्वादशदशाष्टांं ततो वाधिकारिणः। स्वांशात्षष्ठांश भागेन ग्रामपांसन्नियोजयेत ।। (Ibid, 4|236, 4|237).

[5] वृक्षांसंपुष्ययत्नेन फल पुष्पं विचिन्विति ।। मालाकारइवात्यंतं भागहारस्तथाविधिः।। (Ibid, 2|171, 2|172).

[6] यथा विक्रयिणां मूलधन नाशो भवेन्नहि ।। तथा शुल्कं तुहरति शौल्किकः सउदाहृतः ।। (Ibid, 2|174, 2|175).

[7] गणना कुशलो यस्तुदेश भाषाप्रभेदवित्। असंदिग्धम गूढार्थं विलिखेत्स च लेखकः ।। (Ibid, 2|172, 2|173).

The Supervisory Staff

Commenting on the village system as revealed in *Shukra-Nitisar,* Nehru says :[2] "The Village Panchayat or elected council had great powers, both executive and judicial, and its members were treated with the greatest respect by the king's officers. Land was distributed by this Panchayat, which also collected taxes out of the produce and paid the government's share on behalf of the village. Over a number of these village councils, there was a larger Panchayat or council to supervise and interfere if necessary." Shukra mentions of officials who supervised the functioning of ten, one hundred, and one thousand villages, called the *Nayak,* the *Samanta,* and the *Ashapal,* respectively.[3] The book, however, is not very clear on the mutual relations between this hierarchy. Undoubtedly the chief responsibility of each was to ensure regular collection of State revenues within his jurisdiction, and the higher official did exercise powers of control and direction in some respects over the lower one.

As we have stated, *Shukra-Nitisar* is supposed to be a work of the 9th or 10th century A.D. In the centuries that had preceded it, the Gupta Empire had risen and fallen (A.D. 320-467). With the end of the Gupta Empire, the military supremacy of Magadha disappeared and after a period of chaos emerged a set of new dynasties. Sri Harsha did make an attempt to establish a centralised regime. He fought his battles between A.D. 606-612, and then ruled upto A.D. 647.[4] Bana's *Harsha-Charita,* and Hieuen Tsang's travel accounts[5] give detailed, and according to some, exaggerated accounts of his reign and administrative arrangements. During his times Buddhism and Hinduism seem to have flourished side by side. It is widely accepted that the village arrangements described in such details in *Shukra-Nitisar* represent the conditions in Harsha's time as also of the regimes that followed his death.

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[1] शस्त्रास्त्र कुशलोयस्तुदृढांगश्च निरालसः ।। यथायोग्यं समाहूयात्प्रनम्रः प्रतिहारकः ।। (Ibid, 2|173, 2|174).

[2] **Discovery of India, Op. cit., p. 288**

[3] अधिकृतो दशग्रामे नायकः स च कीर्तितः ।। शतग्रामाधिपो यस्तु सोपि सामन्त संज्ञकः ।। आशापालोयुतग्राम भागभाक् ।। (Ibid, 1|190, 1|191).

[4] Certain references of Alberuni about an era associated with the name of Harsha, and a statement of Hieuen Tsang that Harsha reigned for 30 years or a little more when he performed his sixth quinquennial celebrations at Prayag in A.D. 543, as also some other evidences, have created a controversy about Harsha's dates, but 606-647 A.D. is generally accepted.

[5] Hieuen Tsang travelled all over India from A.D. 630 to 644.

Harsha did make an attempt to establish a central power in India, on the lines of the Mauryas and Guptas, but he met only with partial success. And soon after his death a number of new ruling houses—the Pratihars, the Chalukyas, the Pallavas, etc., became dominant over wide tracts, sometimes quarrelling with each other, and at others living as friendly or unfriendly neighbours. Each of them has achievements and failures to its credit, and we are not concerned with them. The administrative arrangements of these kingdoms have been studied and valuable works have been written, but much more remains to be done. Whatever evidence has been gathered shows that the traditional checks on Hindu monarchies were becoming weaker and tendencies towards absolutism were becoming more and more pronounced. These traditional checks, apart from conceptions of *Dharma,* etc., were rule through a council of ministers, respect for usage and custom in matters of law and taxation, and devolution of large powers to local bodies, specially the Village Panchayats. It would appear that whereas the new rulers tended to be absolute in other respects, they interfered the least with the village communities.

Village Communities Under The Pratihar Rulers

Take the case of Pratihars. This dynasty founded by Harichandra at modern Jodhpur in Rajasthan about the middle of the 6th century A.D., continued important till about A.D. 1027, extending itself in different parts of India. V. B. Mishra of Gauhati University seems to have done some original research on the administrative system of the Pratihars.[1] The Pratihar kings exercised despotic powers and except their immediate advisers, the people in general had no right to participate in their deliberations. They, it would appear, encouraged the system of suzerains under them, from whom they obtained *Pancamahasbada,* or the *Rajpatti,* i.e., the royal fillet or tiara. Despite these and other undisputed signs of growing despotism, the villages were largely self-governed. Mishra says that *grama* or village was the last administrative unit having fixed sites and boundaries. The head of the *grama* was called *Gramapati* or *Gamagamika. Mahattara* and *Mahattama* are also mentioned, who were probably associate officials. The *Gramapati* administered the village with the assistance of the village council composed of the village elders. The Council exercised considerable jurisdiction over the village disputes.[2] The *Gramapati* negotiated the amount of government demand from the village, controlled and supervised the watch and ward arrangements, and kept the village records under his custody.[1] The *Gramapati* was remunerated for his services.

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[1] See article by V. B. Mishra entitled "The Administrative System of the Pratihars", **Journal of the University of Gauhati, Vol. III, 1952.**

[2] Mishra says that the village council "might have limited powers over criminal cases but its civil jurisdiction would have been unlimited....Perhaps he (*the Gramapati*) was also the village magistrate having powers to try petty criminal cases." (Ibid.)

Besides, there were separate committees to look after other village affairs. Mention is thus made of the public works committee for which the *Gramapati* raised funds "by public subscriptions and by securing government contribution." There is also mention of a committee to look after the excavation of tanks and wells and watch them from being misused. There are found cases of persons being the recipient of rent-free lands or villages, and the officers were directed not to disturb the peaceful enjoyment of such villages or land. "These villages were free of forced labour of every kind and were granted with treasure-trove and other minor funds."

This village headman was either appointed by the State or recognised by the State after his selection by the village community. He was responsible to the State for maintenance of peace and order in the village and "there is hardly any doubt that the king had the right of control and supervision." The Pratihar rulers maintained an array of officials to run their administration and among these are mentioned: (i) the *Shashthadhikrita,* or superintendent or comptroller of the *Shashthamsa* or *Shadbhaga,* i.e., the sixth part of produce due to the king; (ii) *Basagramika,* or officer-in-charge of groups of ten villages; (iii) *Kshetrapa,* or supervisor of cultivators; (iv) *Mahabhogika,* or chief officer in charge of revenue, etc.

Village Communities Under The Chalukyas

We have come across a fairly detailed account of the revenue and village system of the Chalukyas in a study by Lakshmi Shankar Vyas.[2] The lowest unit of administration was the village where the Village Panchayat or the *Grama-Sangha* was supreme. The village folk were called *Kautumbiks* and the village headman was known as *Pattakil.* This very term, in later times, became *Patel,* with whom we are all familiar. He was responsible for collection of State dues from the village. In this work he got the help and co-operation of the village community. The village was self-governed, but this *Pattakil* was in many matters responsible to the State. The State revenue was traditionally fixed at one-sixth of the produce and that is why the king was also variously called *Shadbhagbhritaraja* (i.e. the king getting the sixth part as his share by way of wages), the *Shadbhagbhak* or *Shadamswavriti*. In case of crop failure, or other calamities, when the peasants expressed diffi culty with regard to payment of State's share, the matter was re ferred to a duly constituted court, which gave the final decision o the matter.

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[1] "The invariable mention of the village headman in the land and village grants shows that he was intimately connected with the revenue administration." (Ibid.)

[2] Lakshmi Shankar Vyas : **Mahan Chalukya Kumarapal** (in Hindi), being a treatise on Kumarpal, a great ruler among Chalukyas (A.D. 1142—1173); published by Bharatiya Gyanpith, Kashi; 1954. See pp. 131-180.

Village Communities In South India

In fact the history and organisation of village communities i South India[1] is an integral and absorbing part of Indian history. D Radha Kumud Mookerji has rightly said :[2] "Local Government i Northern India and that in Southern India belong to the same serie in the order of sociological development. Their tribal origins an rudiments may have been diverse and heterogeneous, but there is n mistaking the essentially Indian stamp impressed upon these institu tions." And, further:[3] "........the Southern institutions, whe they first emerge into view, evince marks of a certain maturity and certain established order, which point to a long process of silen growth in the dim twilight of the earlier centuries, unconnecte though they might be with those political crisis and cataclysms c State, which leave historical records behind."

In fact, the inscriptions and the epigraphs of Southern Indi which throw light on the village organisation, reveal greater detail and arrangements than found in the North. They testify to th existence of the *Sabha* and the *Maha Sabha*, the assembly of th people in each *gram* or village. The *Sabha*, also called the *Ura* consisted of elected members about 30 or 40 in number. Thi assembly held meetings and transacted the general affairs of th village either in a temple or under a bunyan tree. Besides the *Sabh* a number of other committees like the temple committee, the tan ommittee, etc., are mentioned to look after the general adminis-ration of the village. The inscriptions also give numerous details oncerning the method of selecting these committees, qualifications etermining the eligibility, and also enumerate those disqualified. And, as in the North, while the village is the pivot of rural adminis-ration, next to the village come the *nattar* and the *nadu* in the ierarchy of administration.

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[1] In his admirable work **A History of South India** (Oxford University Press, 1955) the first attempt to present, in a compact form, a comprehensive account of th history of the whole of South India treated as a single geographical entity, Prof K. A. Nilakanta Sastri has rightly referred to the strange neglect of the South i the general histories of India. He has referred to the explanations given b Vincent Smith for this neglect, which, of course, do not stand on firm ground It is in the South, more than in the North, that Indian culture reached its fulles development and, what is more important, was preserved through centuries o foreign invasion and conquest. Much material is available and these need to b studied and compiled. There is need for many more works like that of Prof Sastri. Village communities in the South, under the various great dynasties whic ruled there, reached a high stage of maturity and efficiency and much detaile information is available about them, which, of course, needs to be put together Limited as we are by reasons of space, we attempt a very brief description o village communities in the South on the basis of information we could get, bu this should not be attributed to any 'neglect' on the part of the author. As we have said earlier, we agree with K. M. Panikkar that the incoming Aryans go their village system from the early inhabitants of India.

[2] **Local Government in Ancient India**, IInd Edition, 1920; Preface, pp. xix-xx.

[3] Ibid, xx-xxi.

The functions undertaken by these bodies for the well-being of he village are striking. They bestowed great attention on the up-eep of the tanks, wells, village-roads and temples. For this pur-ose they levied taxes, and even compulsory labour was imposed by he village body in the interests of the community. They looked after internal law and order and took measures to shield the com-munity from external dangers. Instances are found where those village inhabitants who acted against the interests of the community were declared *gramadrohins* and *gramakantakas,* and their property was confiscated. They settled the mode of acquisition and sale of land, and looked after the preservation of communal and other public lands received in charity for the maintenance and upkeep of the irri-gational works, temples, educational and religious institutions.

Dr. Altekar says that under the Pallavas, village elders called *Mahattaras,* running the village administration, can be traced as arly as 250 A.D., but no clear proofs are available of the creation and evelopment of regular committees. But the inscriptions and other vidence gathered from Gujrat and Deccan clearly show the existence f village executives under the name *Mahattaradhikarins* and *Adhi-arimahattaras.* The records available of the Chola kings (900-1300 .D.) give greater details of the village organisation in Tamil villages. The village assembly of *Agrahar* villages, mostly inhabited by earned Brahmins was called *Sabha,* and of other villages was called *rar.* Sometimes assemblies of both the types co-existed in one and he same village. All the adults of the village constituted the mem-ership of the assembly. All were informed of meetings of the ssembly by beat of drums. They elected a village executive alled *Alunganam.*[1]

Valuable light is thrown on the village communities n South India in Dr. Mathai's work[2] on village communi-es in India. From an inscription of the 13th century A.D., he hows that the kings took initiative in the formation of village communities[1] as laid down in Kautilya's *Artha-Shastra.* It woul appear that in the tenth century A.D. there existed a villag Uttaramerrur, which is present today also under the name c Uttaramallur in Chingleput district in Tamil area. Th Chola King Parantaka I was then the ruler. Two ins criptions discovered in a temple of this village throw a flood c light on the village system of the times. It was an *Agrahar* villag and, as Dr. Altekar puts it,[2] "the details given about the executive c the *Grama Sabha,* or the constitution of the Panchayat have greatl benefited history." Dr. Mathai says that the main point revealed b these inscriptions is that there existed several committees for villag administration. The committees, whose designation gives an idea c the nature of their responsibilities, were as under :

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[1] **Pracheen Bharatiya Shasan Paddhati,** Op. cit., pp. 173-174.

[2] **John Mathai** : **Village Government in British India,** with preface by Sydney **Webb, London, 1915.**

1) Annual Committee
2) Garden Committee
3) Tank Committee
4) Gold Committee
5) Committee of Justice
6) A Committee styled *Panch-Vara.*[3]

Life in the villages was to a large extent common and based o mutual aid rather than mutual exclusiveness. Dr. Mathai has quote as follows:[4] "From a South Indian inscription of the tenth centur A.D., it would appear that each village owned a certain number c looms in common, and the weavers who worked them were maint ained out of the village fund. Any other looms would be ur authorised."

These village communities, their internal government, survive in a recognisable form when the British came. Dr. Matha has given the following[5] list of officers and public servants i a Madras village at the beginning of the 19th century, as revealed i the 1812 Select Committee Report of the House of Commons, the famous *Fifth Report :*

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[1] "The village in question was to accommodate 108 Brahmins. Sufficient land wa purchased for the village site, which was to contain room for the erection o temple, and for the household of the 108 Brahmins, of the village servants, and o the men in charge of the village library (*Sarasvati-Bhandharattar*). The land were bought from the old title-holders and tenants with all the benefits an appurtenances which belonged to them; and these were transferred in thei entirety to the new settlers. A right of way was secured over certain land outside the village for the Brahmins to walk to the tank for the performance o their daily prayers (*Sandhyavandana*). Land was also provided for grazin cattle, for the maintenance of the families of the new settlers, each of whon appears to have received a definite piece of land and for the remuneration c the village officers and artisans." (Ibid, p. 12)

[2] Pracheen Bharatiya Shasan Paddhati, Op. cit., p. 174.

[3] Village Government in British India, Op. cit., pp. 25-26. Dr. Mathai says that th fifth committee was not perhaps a separate committee but one of the other com mittees sitting as a Committee of Justice. The Annual Committee was mo probably the general body of the village adults and was perhaps the premie committee. As for the *Panch-Vara*, Dr. Mathai feels that it was most probab a committee for this village specially to collect a special tax.

[4] From Epigraphic Indica, Calcutta, Vol. iv, p. 138 (Ibid, footnote, p. 17).

[5] Ibid, pp. 15-16.

(1) The *Headman*—in charge of general superintendence, collection of village revenue, in charge of police work, settlement of village disputes.

(2) The *Accountant*—in charge of keeping account of cultivation and maintenance of registers of allied affairs.

(3) *The Watchman*—these were of two types, the superior and the inferior. The first one had to get information of crimes and offences and to escort and protect persons travelling from one village to another. The activities of the inferior one were confined to the village and included, among others, guarding the crops and assisting in measuring them.

(4) The *Boundaryman*—responsible for prescribing the limits of the village and giving evidence about them in cases of disputes.

(5) The *Superintendent of the tank and water courses*—responsible for distribution of irrigation water.

(6) The *Priest*—performance of village worship.

(7) The *Schoolmaster*—teaching village children to read and write 'in the sand.'

Besides these are mentioned the *astrologer,* the *smith* and *carpenter,* the *washerman,* the *barber,* the *cowkeeper,* the *doctor,* the *dancing girl,* and the *musician* and *poet.* "The original method of remunerating the village servants was *either* by giving them a grant of land free of rent and sometimes free of revenue, or by giving them definite shares out of the common heap of grain on the threshing floor or from the individual harvest of every villager, or by combining grants of land and of grain—supplemented in each case by various occasional perquisites."

Village Communities Under The Marathas

Such was the position of village communities at the beginning of the 19th century, when the British had well advanced towards establishing their undisputed authority over India. Prior to the establishment of British authority and after the decline of Moghul Rule, the Marathas established an Empire which lasted for 170 years. This last of the Hindu Empires was apparently in full swing when the incoming Westerners defeated it. The details which are available about its administrative arrangements clearly show that the village communities were free to administer their own affairs.[1] There was, undoubtedly, a hierarchy of officers to supervise their functions. Dr. Surendranath Sen's valuable study on Maratha Administration clearly shows that the pattern of village organisation was the same as found in other periods described above.[1] At the top of the Peshwa Rule was the *Huzur Daftar,* under the direct control of the Peshwa through his *Karbhari.* This office supervised the work of the village communities through its officers. The chief man in the village was the *Patil.* He was the revenue officer, the police magistrate and the chief judicial officer, more or less the same as we have seen in the Tamil villages. He was paid by the villagers. Next was the *Kulkarni.* He was invariably a Brahmin and was the *Patil's* clerk and the village record-keeper. Although all the villagers had joint responsibility for regular payments, there are instances when the *Patil* and the *Kulkarni* had to suffer imprisonment for arrears on the village. He was also paid by the village, but his rights and perquisites (*Manpan* and *Hakk* as they were called) were far inferior to those of the *Patil.*

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[1] Says Elphinstone : "From whatever point of view we examine the native government in the Deccan, the first and the most important feature is the division into villages or townships. These communities contain, in miniatures, all the materials of a state within themselves and are almost sufficient to protect their members, if all other governments are withdrawn."

Below the *Kulkarni* was the *Chaugula,* who assisted the *Patil* in his duties and also had care of the *Kulkarni's* records. The next man was *Mahar,* who helped the *Patil* in revenue collection by summoning the villagers to the *Patil's* office. He was also the village watchman and looked after village sanitation. The next village officer was the *Potdar,* always a goldsmith by caste, whose duty was to check the genuineness of the coins. Sometimes a *Potdar* held the office for more than one village.

Dr. Sen has said: "The Maratha village was a self-contained unit. Surrounded by a wall, it tried to be independent of the outside world as much as possible. As it had its political autonomy, the Maratha village tried to have its industrial autonomy also; and this brought into existence the twelve *balutas,*[2] or the village artisans."

While this was the pattern of village organisation, it is obvious that superior and inferior interests in land had fairly well advanced. This is evidenced in the existence of *Mirasdars* and *Upris.* The former had permanent rights in land whereas the latter were tenants-at-will, holding government land under the management of *Mamlatdars.* The *Mirasdar,* however, had to pay heavier taxes, and the major portion of the village expenses fell on his shoulders. The village community was regarded by the Maratha administration as an organic whole, and the government held *Mirasdars* as a body responsible for the payment of revenue.

There were also some other officers in the official hierarchy, the *Deshmukh* and the *Deshpande,* the *Kamavisdar,* the *Mamlatdar,* etc., but we would rather close this discussion with the following words of

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[1] Surendranath Sen : **Administrative System of the Marathas,** University of Calcutta, 1952, (Second and enlarged edition): pp. 211-242.

[2] These have been enumerated as follows : *Mahar, Sutar, Lohar, Chambhar, Parit, Kumbhar, Nhavi, Mang, Kulkarni, Joshi, Gurav* and *Potdar.*

Dr. Sen : "....the village communities enjoyed real self-government within the empire. If the village officers were not elected by the villagers, neither were they appointed by the Government, and although they had to obey the orders of the Government, the very nature of their communities put them under the moral influence of public opinion, as they were paid directly by the villagers."

Co-operative Endeavour And Decentralisation Of Power—The Keynote

This, in brief, is the story of village communities in India in its long history.[1] Its amazing continuity has drawn wide attention, and one is impressed by the team spirit and co-operative endeavour seen in them. It is positive proof of the inherent genius of our people to manage local affairs efficiently, on decentralised basis. Herein we witness vast masses of people drawn together to undertake great responsibilities with a common consciousness, fraternal feelings and a highly commendable sense regarding their community of interests. The whole village system indicates how powers of government can be divided up into hierarchal spheres of activity, where each sphere with its quantum of allotted power can be made to function autonomously.

These village communities, indeed, made and marred Indian history. The entire development of Indian society is to be traced to their continued existence. And when we of newly liberated India seek to revive them, and when the Directive Principles of our Republican Constitution makes the organisation of Village Panchayats a State responsibility, it is of the utmost importance that we view them in the correct historical perspective, so that we have the best of their advantages and avoid the pitfalls.

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[1] An account of the village system during Muslim Rule would be found in Chapter V.

CHAPTER IV

SLAVERY, FEUDALISM, AND VILLAGE COMMUNITIES IN INDIA AND THE WEST (I)

> *"Of all political elements the most dangerous for a king is the people. . . . . The genuine people—the proletariat, the small peasants and the mob—they are, as Hobbes says, PUER ROBUSTUS SED MALITIOSUS, a stalwart and malicious boy, who will not let himself be made a fool of by lean kings or by fat ones. The people would force from His Majesty above all a constitution, besides universal surffrage, freedom of the press and association and other unpleasant things. And when they had got all this they would with the greatest possible speed use it in order to declare the might, the dignity and the poetry of monarchy superfluous."*[1]
>
> —*MARX*

THE immemorial existence of the Indian village, the laws laid down for its main arrangements, its officials, its servants, its general inhabitants, its self-contained character, all this is a matter of common knowledge. Maine has said: "The indigenous system is one of common enjoyment by village communities, and, inside those communities, by families. The individual here has no power of disposing of his property; even if he be chief of his household, the utmost he can do, as a rule, is to regulate the disposition of his property among his children within certain very narrow limits. The Village Council is always viewed as a representative body, and not as a body possessing inherent authority, and, whatever be its real number, it always bears a name which recalls its ancient constitution of five persons. No ownership of Indian land was discoverable, except that of the village communities, subject to the dominion of the State."[2]

This characteristic feature of Indian society, namely, the absence of feudal bond-slavery and the serf institution, though widely accepted, is nevertheless challenged. We have come across one such challenge in a recent work by Dr. Bhupendra Nath Dutta.[3]

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[1] Article in **Deutsche Brüssler Zeitung** of Cologne, dated September 12, 1847; (quoted from **Correspondence of Marx and Engels**, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1941 p. 193).

[2] **Village Communities in the East and West**, Op. cit., pages 41-42, 123, 154.

[3] **Dialectics of Land Economics of India, Calcutta, 1952.**

The learned author, who says in the preface that he met Lenin at Moscow in 1921, and who is apparently a Marxist, seems to differ very sharply from Marx and Engels on what they say about the absence of private property in land in India and the East. Dr. Dutta is undoubtedly angry and remarks: "The misdirection of Maine have led Marx and Engels to accept the idea that tribal communism or communistic villages which Marx characterised as 'idyllic republics', existed in ancient India, and that feudalism did not develop in India."[1]

Marx And Engels On Indian Society

Marx and Engels undoubtedly gave great thought to the question of the amazing continuation of the village system in India through centuries. Engels regards "the absence of property in land as the key"[2] to this phenomenon in the East, and specially in India. In his letter to Engels, dated 14 June, 1853, Marx mentions of[3] "idyllic republics, which jealously guarded only the boundaries of the village against the neighbouring village (and) still exist in a fairly perfect form in the North-Western parts of India which have but recently fallen into English hands." They together posed before themselves the questions: "How does it come about that the orientals do not arrive at landed property, even in its feudal form." Marx wrote for the New York *Daily Tribune* in 1853, as its London correspondent, a series of letters on India.[4] In these, as also in numerous references to India in his *Capital,* he has held that the "extremely ancient Indian communities . . . . . are based on possession in common of the land, on the blending of agriculture and handicrafts, and on an unalterable division of labour."[5]

Marx and Engels got interested in the evolution of Indian history not only because they were required to do so in order to complete their study of the laws of capitalism, which grew up in Britain and expanded on the basis of colonisation of India by the British, but also because they found that here the march of history was not just as they traced it for the West. Marx and Engels studied the laws of social growth, and enunciated a law, famous as the law of historical materialism, which they characterised as the dialectical and materialist understanding of history. According to this, human history marches forward according to changes in the methods of production, nd the relationship of society to them. The first was the stage of primitive communism, when means of production were simple, and no private property existed in society. In course of time, this society breaks up and ushers in the slave society which grows over to the feudal system, which breaks up and is replaced by the capitalist system.

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[1] Ibid, p. 232.

[2] Engels' letter to Marx, dated 6 June, 1953; **Correspondence of Marx and Engels** Op. cit., p. 66.

[3] Ibid, p. 70.

[4] These are available in a publication entitled **Articles on India** by Karl Marx, Peoples Publishing House, Bombay.

[5] **Capital, Vol. I,** Foreign Language's Publishing House, Moscow, 1954; p. 357.

During their lifetime Marx and Engels could give but scant attention to tracing the 'slave' period in Indian history. Their references to existence of 'slavery' in Indian history are very rare and casual. Indeed, they frankly state that they found no substantial changes in the material foundations of Indian society in the long ages before the conquest of India by the British. That Maine, a British empire-builder, and Marx, the avowed enemy of all empires, arrived at identical conclusions about the structure of Indian society, is full of meaning and import for all students of India's history. Maine did witness, towards the end of the eighteenth century, a drift towards rural inequality, but, by and large, the self-sufficient village communities with common ownership of land remained dominant, and feudalism, in the classic European monarchical form, was simply non-existent.

The Slave Society: Its Characteristics

In the Slave period, which, as Marx has traced, grew out of the development of exchange in the early primitive communist societies, the slave was a piece of property which could be bought and sold on the market, like any other commodity. Slave labour formed the basis of agriculture, in fact of all the wealth and pomp and palaces of the Roman Empire. In the strict logic of slavery, slave was regarded as a productive machine existing merely for the benefit of his master; the food and housing provided for him were merely those which were needed in order to get the best work out of him, just as with a horse or an ox. Slaves from alien countries, conquered in war or captured in the course of trade, were treated in that fashion. This slave society ultimately broke up as a result of slave revolts, which in their fury and violence may have but few parallels in history. Almost always sporadic, and seldom organised, these revolts were crushed, even if they achieved some initial success, but hardly any record exists about them. Almost always these revolts took place when, after calamitous wars or natural disasters like the interminable plague of the second century A.D., the ruling classes did what they could to pass on the colossal burdens thus created to the shoulders of the slaves and the poorer classes. Recent researches and investigations have revealed that these revolts were more frequent and extensive than what is generally believed.[1]

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[1] See article entitled "Peasant Revolts in Late Roman Gaul and Spain" by E. A. Thompson, Past and Present, (half-yearly journal published from London), November, 1952.

Later, especially when slaves were born on their master's estate, their treatment tended to become like that of an inferior member of the family rather than of a machine. This progress led to what has been called the status of serfdom. The serf was bound to render certain services to his lord and he could not leave the estate without permission. He even held land on servile tenure, that is, in exchange for a certain amount of labour which he performed for the lord.

The Relevance Of This Discussion

The form of labour engaged in agriculture in the West underwent subsequent transformations, a development which Marx and Engels found absent in India. Of course, in the 'static' village communities holding land in common, in the "Asiatic society" as they called it, they apparently saw an economic base akin to feudalism. But to these we shall come later. Here we would like to say that this discussion of the continuation of the village community system in India would not have been necessary for our study, but for the fact that there is a section of opinion which is opposed to the nation-wide revival of the Panchayat system in India undertaken by the Congress Governments in the different States, who regard Village Panchayats as survivals of tribalism, and who would rather not have it. In this revival they see India going back, turning back the clock of history and adopting a beaten and threadbare path and an outworn mode of social organisation. As against this, the Father of the Nation, knowing India as he did, steadfastly held to and passionately propagated the view that India can come into its own, and Indian humanity can rise to its full height and stature and serve the world with its message of peace and goodwill among all human beings only by reviving its dead village communities.

Two Tendencies

The question of the existence of slavery and feudalism in India, therefore, merits dispassionate discussion. We approach the question in all humility, well aware as we are of the serious gaps in our knowledge and the absence of discipline in our effort. The difficulty is heightened by lack of real good studies on this problem as such by our scholars. Generally speaking, two tendencies are clearly discernible. One has the tendency of seeing nothing but bright and good in all that existed in our past and painting them as the consummation of highest that is in man, which tendency, in certain cases, boils down to downright Hindu chauvinism. On the other extreme are Marxists who, basing themselves on Marx's and Engels' pattern of historical growth and development, go all out to fit Indian history in that pattern and make painstaking efforts to prove that

India did have primitive communism, then passed on to slavery, thence passed through the usual feudal period, when the British conquerors overran it. In between these studies are the efforts of certain British and Western historians who discuss the existence of feudal features in India.

Some Soviet Studies Of Indian Society

There exist, indeed, a large number of studies of the first type, in English as well as in Hindi and other Indian languages. Of the second variety, we have come across a valuable work by Mr. S. A. Dange, which describes the transition of India from "primitive communism" to "slavery".[1] This probably is the most considerable work of the Marxian school. Rahul Sankrityayana, a world authority on Buddhism and Pali, and a great scholar by his right, also a Marxist and sometimes Professor of Oriental Studies at Leningrad University, in his study *Manav Samaj*[2], upholds the view that India passed through stages of slavery and feudalism in the usual sense. Further, it would appear that two authors in the Soviet Union, V. I. Avdiev and A. Osipov, in their works *History of the Ancient East* and *A Short Textbook of Indian History upto the Tenth Century,* as also another Soviet publication, *A Textbook of Political Economy,* and some references in *The Great Soviet Encyclopaedia,*[3] strongly uphold the slave and feudal pattern in India's history. According to them, the slave-owning mode of production prevailed in India (as also Egypt, China, etc.) in the IV-II millennia before our era.[4] Referring to the countries of the East, e.g., China, India,

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[1] S. A. Dange : **India from Primitive Communism to Slavery,** Peoples Publishing House, Bombay. Much as we deplore the vehemence of Mr. Dange's language and his aspersions on the motives of Indian 'bourgeois' historians (thus Jayaswal's great **Hindu Polity** is nothing but "militant history writing" to refute the British assertion that India is unfit for parliamentary democratic government, since we had it long ago; or **Glimpses of World History** is "confused and vacillating", etc.), the author deserves credit for producing this study based on original Sanskrit texts in spite of hectic political life of more than three decades. The book is undoubtedly an original contribution, though it has been strongly criticised, not only by non-Marxists, but Indian Marxists themselves. [See file of **India Today,** a monthly (now ceased publication) edited by P. C. Joshi from Allahabad.]

[2] Rahul Sankrityayana : **Manav Samaj** (in Hindi), i.e., Human Society, published by Granthamala Karyalaya, Patna, 1942.

[3] For these references we are indebted to an article entitled "Ancient India through Soviet Eyes" in **ISCUS,** journal of th Indo-Soviet Cultural Society, Vol. II, No. 2, Summer, 1955.

[4] Says the Soviet **Textbook of Political Economy :** "Natural economy predominated to an even greater extent in the countries of the ancient East than in the world of antiquity. Here slave labour was extensively used in State-economy and the economy of the big feudals and temples. Domestic slavery was powerfully developed. In the village economy of China, India, Babylon and Egypt, along with the slaves, large masses of the commune-peasants were also exploited. The system of debt-slavery acquired great importance here. The commune-peasant, unable to pay the debt to his creditor-usurer or the rent to the landowner, was obliged to work on his economy for a specific period of time as a debt slave." And again : "In the agricultural countries of the East where irrigated land was of decisive significance, the peasant was in enslaving dependence on the feudal lord because not only land but the water-resources and irrigation works also were the property of the feudal state or of different feudal lords. **(ISCUS, Op. cit.).**

Japan, etc., the *Textbook* says that "feudal relations were combined with relations of slavery over a long period." Avdiev has concluded: "The ancient towns arose, apparently, in the period of the formation of primitive slave-owning society," and that "domestic and debt slavery were special features of slavery in India." He thinks that Vedic society, while testifying to the presence of village commune, also shows the rise of ancient slave-ownership. Mr. Osipov is equally definite and categorical about his findings. He thinks that in Vedic times, lands were held in common, but each big family had a specific part of land. Further, as trade developed and slave-owners got enriched, the wealthy became the leaders of tribes for class interests. and the ramified apparatus of bureaucracy was created.

The Findings Of *The Soviet Encyclopaedia*

We have not seen the books of Avdiev and Osipov, our references being based on the *ISCUS* article, and so it is difficult for us to judge the quality of their study and the authority of their pronouncements. But *The Great Soviet Encyclopaedia* is certainly an authoritative document, and its pronouncements on slavery and feudalism in India, both in regard to their character, and sweeping, categorical generalisations, far outstrip the two authors mentioned. It sees in Vedic society the growth of slavery and the birth of gentile aristocracy among the tribes. Slave-owning states grew in India in X-VII centuries B.C., and the primitive communal system was destroyed.[1] In these states, aristocrats and priests owned land and slave-owning economy was developed there. Slave-aristocracy lived in towns and handicrafts developed there, and trade developed between them.

Not only this. Says the *Encyclopaedia*: "The exploitation of slaves began to play a big part even in the village communes." This statement is reconciled with the declaration that slaves had a minimum of property and they had regular families. From this is drawn the conclusion that slavery in India had a patriarchal character. Thus in ancient Indian society, if the *Encyclopaedia* is to be believed, primitive communal system was combined with patriarchal forms of slave-owning relations, most certainly a type of amazing tight-rope dance, however contradictory and mutually exclusive it may appear. And, strange though it is, "the development of slavery did not lead to the full destruction of the ancient Indian Commune." In the Maurya period, the slave-owning relations were further developed and free members of the commune were enslaved. And we are further informed that Buddhism became the official religion of ancient slave-owning Indian states, who found that Brahminism no more suited their purpose.[1] Gupta empire was the last slave-owning empire in India. We are not enlightened as to the character of Harsha's empire. We are only told that the struggle of the slaves, the cultivators of land without rights and of the commune peasants, as well as the growth of productive forces, led to the decay of the slave-owning system.

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[1] Says the **Soviet Encyclopaedia**: "Simultaneously with the development of slave-owning relations and states which destroyed the isolation of tribes from one another, there took place the process of the formation of nationalities (Shaurseni, Matsya, Maharashtri, Magadhi, etc.)."

This exercise must necessarily have its corollary, and so we are informed that feudal society was formed in India in the VI-VII centuries A.D. Land continued to be owned by communes, but the feudal landlord (from where this dignitary appears, we are not enlightened) began to transform the common land into land allotted to peasants and free commune peasants into tax-paying peasants. Tribute, transformed into rent, was the expression of the feudal ownership of land. Feudalisation grew, though at unequal pace, and even serfdom appeared. Social stratification took place even within the commune itself.

Studies Of Indian Society By British Officers In India

Of the third category of writers on feudalism in India, the early British Officers turned historians, James Tod's *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan,* published in 1829, may be regarded as the most important. In the Rajputana princes he found almost an exact replica of the colourful regalia of European feudal barons with armorial bearings and banners, and even a bard. Under them were vassals of higher or lower rank with obligations of military service and attendance. The vassals, Tod says, held landed estates like European fiefs. And alongside of them existed the *bhumia,* a freehold tenure. Tod regarded them as similar to European allodial proprietors. Tod has discussed in great detail the relationships between the prince, the vassal and the *bhumia* and has found a lot in common with feudal relations in Europe, but has conceded that "in cases regarding the distribution of justice or the internal economy . . . . the government officers seldom interfere." And he has shown that it was the ancient self-constituted Panchayat, which decided all cases of property. Later British Officers and commentators, however, did not agree with Tod's findings about feudalism in Rajputana. A. C. Lyall, a British Chief Commissioner in Rajputana in the 1870s, and a friend and student of Maine, in his work *Asiatic Studies: Religious and Social,* held that certain outward features of Rajput society bore a resemblance to feudal society, but the system had not become entirely feudal, i.e., nowhere had "military tenure entirely obliterated the original tenure by blood and birthright of the clan." He concludes that what Tod called Rajput feudalism was but an incomplete superstructure and Rajputana was in fact a group of "tribal suzerainties" rapidly passing into the classic feudal form, had not the British conquered India. Another Englishman, William Crooke, who edited the IIIrd edition of Tod's work in 1920, and himself a keen student of tribal organisation in Northern India, held that closer examination reveals that Tod's analogies between Rajput society and European feudalism are "superficial".

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[1] Says the **Encyclopaedia** : "The ruling classes regarded Buddhism, which preached passivity, reconciliation with reality, as a harmless teaching and supported it, making it their ideological weapon, while Brahminism, arising already in the epoch of the decay of the primitive communal system and sanctifying tribal dismemberment, could not be the ideological foundation of the big slave-owners state. (**ISCUS,** Op. cit.).

In this connection, mention may also be made of the work of a Russian, Maxim M. Kovalevski, a leading Russian social and economic historian before World War I. In one of his early publications, *Communal Landholdings: Causes, Course, and Results of its Disintegration* (1879), Kovalevski has attempted to establish that a very very slow process of individualisation of property, encouraged by the Brahmins, had set in India many centuries before the Muslim conquest. And his central thesis is that the land policy of the Muslim conquerors, primarily from the eleventh century onward, set in motion a process of feudalisation of the older structure. Kovalevski's findings were, however, hotly contested and demolished by a later British Officer, W. H. Moreland, in his famous work *Agrarian System of Moslem India.*

An Assessment Of These Studies

It would appear from the above, which can hardly be called a bare summary of the different ideas propounded on the question of feudalism in India, that the Western mind, more than the Indian or the Oriental mind, has been exercised over the subject. Not that eminent Indian historians have not dealt with the subject. In fact we will have occasion to refer to them later in this chapter. The Westerners first thought of the problem when they came here as conquerors, in pursuit of their "civilising mission". It is apparent from their writings, however, that the highest among them, Maine not excepted, suffered from pre-conceived notions and prejudices, and they are indeed guilty of propagating some stark untruths and myths.[1] Their "civilising mission", in fact, blurred all along their attempts to understand our history. This combined with their utter and colossal ignorance of India's customs and practices and the Indian mind and heart, considerably reduces the value of their opinion. As for the Soviet writers, it is difficult for us to say anything definitely as we do not have before us their original writings. It is obvious, however, that apart from their ignorance of Indian customs and mind and heart, they start with the set objective of fitting Indian history in the general pattern of historical development laid down by Marx and Engels, and often enough they appear to express ideas which Marx denied and refuted. Much as these efforts at studying and interpreting Indian history by Westerners are to be valued, it is obvious that the historians of free India are now called upon to go more thoroughly into the question of slavery and feudalism in India, with an unprejudiced mind and place before the world a scientific and correct interpretation.

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[1] Thus, for example, Maine says: "The British Government, like all Eastern sovereigns, claims a large share of the produce of the soil, most of which, however, unlike other Eastern sovereigns, it returns to its subjects through the judicial and administrative services which it maintains, and through the public works which it systematically executes." (**Village Communities in the East and West**, Op. cit.; pp. 31-32). This statement is shamefacedly made in spite of the great drain of India's wealth to England, and in spite of the heartless manner in which the great irrigation works of pre-British India were allowed to go into disuse!

Prof. Vinogradoff's Study Of Early Rural Society In The West

And now, in order to better assess the existence or otherwise of feudalism in India, we would attempt a brief description of feudalism in the West. In Western countries, the older tribal and clan organisations evolved into the village communal system. Prof. Vinogradoff's studies of Greek, Welsh, Slav and Teutonic rural practices established that :

(i) The tribes united together on the basis of blood relations were really a variety of the clan system. They were formed by alliance between descendents from the same male ancestors for purposes of defence and mutual help. It involved a subsidiary recognition of relationship through women;

(ii) The arrangement of agriculture on the open field system, based on the solidarity of the groups of neighbour cultivators, was originally conditioned by kinship;

(iii) The transition from tribal to village communities was brought about by a standardisation of holdings, which aimed at establishing a fair proportion between the rights and duties of the peasants.

Villages In Medieval Europe

The compact village, the scattered peasant holdings, and the communal routine of the open fields dominated the life of medieval Europe. The imperial system and feudalism, however, obscured the ancient village communalism, suppresed the rights of the peasantry in the common lands, disintegrated village solidarity and absorbed most of the profits of agriculture. We have referred earlier to the transition to serfdom, whereunder the serf came to hold land on servile tenure, in exchange for a certain amount of labour performed for the lord. Generally, he worked three days for the lord and three days for himself. The next phase was represented by the land and stock lease in which the owner provided not only land but farm stock, for instance, timber, cattle, etc. The tenant was a poor man—often an enfranchised serf—who could offer nothing but his labour. Often enough the produce of farm was divided between the two. Gradually, as the tenant became better off and had his own cattle, this changed into an agreement to lease the grounds only, on shares, the landowner receiving one-third or one-half of the crop. This system, known in French as *Metayage*, is still common in the south of France and in Italy.

Development Of Rent

The following three phases of development of rent are, therefore, clearly distinguished : (i) Labour rent, (ii) Rent in kind, and (iii) Money-rent.

Labour rent is paid when the peasant works a part of his time on his own land for the satisfaction of his own needs and those of his family, and for the remaining part of his time on the landlord's land for his benefit.

Rent in kind is nothing but a converted form of labour rent. In this case, the peasant does not give away his surplus labour to the landlord in the form of direct labour, but in the form of products. This is indicative of a higher level of development of the productive forces. The consequent change in the relations between the landlords and the serfs consists in the fact that the former no longer has to watch the latter at work, thus giving the peasant a greater measure of independence.

Money rent is a modified form of rent in kind. It is paid to the lord not in the form of products but in the form of a fixed amount of money. Money rent, however, pre-supposes not only the production of surplus product, but also its sale on the market. This is possible when exchange relations are fairly well advanced. Its further development leads to what may be called small peasant agriculture, freed from feudal fetters and based on private property in land.

The Early Tenurial Reforms

Development of this small peasant agriculture may be regarded as the most considerable tenurial reform under European feudal agriculture. Early communities were socialistic in their use of land. Whether it was owned by the chief or by the community as a whole, the individual had no rights beyond what tradition allowed. The land was divided up afresh every year, so that a cultivator could take no permanent interest in any piece of land. Usually the land allotted to one cultivator consisted of a number of detached strips, so that much of his time was wasted in walking from one to another. This was the state of things in Western Europe in the middle ages.

The next reform of importance introduced under feudalism was the rotation of crops. In primitive times, it was customary to cultivate one piece of land one year and move on to the next. Later, with more settled conditions, this grew into a system in which the ground was cropped every alternate year or two years out of three, and left fallow in between. Certain pioneer British agriculturists of the XVI or XVII centuries discovered that by growing different crops in a suitable order, the fertility of the soil could be kept up without the need of leaving it fallow. This meant a great addition to the amount of food produced on a given area.

The European Feudal System

Despite the developments narrated above, in the Middle ages, in Europe, the whole burden of exploitation, the maintenance of the luxurious pursuits of the whole hierarchy of social structure—the princes, the nobles, the clergy, the patrician, and city burghers—rested upon the shoulders of the peasantry. He, for the most part, was a piece of property and a beast of burden. In the feudal system there was no idea of equality or freedom. There was only an idea of rights and obligations. The feudal lord received as his right free service and part of the produce, and it was supposed to be his obligation to give protection to the tenants. But this obligation was, in the main, forgotten. And so the masses of people were miserable, but they saw no way out of the difficulties. They put up with them and carried on their life of hopeless labour. The clergy, a close ally of feudalism, dinned into their heads the duty of obeying the lord, and so they put up with almost anything. And so we had a society of lords and retainers on the one hand and very poor people on the other. Round the great and elegant castles of the lords were the mud and wooden huts of the serfs, whom the lords considered only some degrees removed from the cattle to be tended. As a matter of fact, in the 11th century, a French peasant was valued at 38 sous, while a horse was worth 100 sous![1] These lords did no useful work except fight each other and play big game-hunt and tournaments.

This European feudal system was one of gradations and classes, the serfs or villeins being on the lowest rung and carrying on their backs the whole weight of the social structure and producing all the food and other necessaries of life. This structure of gradations and classes had in turn grown out of the disorder, anarchy, violence and chaos which followed as a result of the collapse of the old order in the West following the fall of the Roman Empire. The strong seized what they could and held on to it till a stronger person did not come and threw them out. Strong castles were built and their lords organised raiding parties, harried the countryside and fought the lords of nearby castles. The poor peasants and workers on the lands were the worst sufferers. Disorganised and weak as they were, they could not defend themselves against the robber-barons. There existed no strong central government to protect them. Consequently, the peasants were forced to come to terms with the lords of the castles according to which they agreed to give him part of what they produced in their fields, and also to serve him in some ways, on the condition that the lord will not plunder them and also protect them from others of his kind. In the same way, the lords of the smaller castles came to terms with the lords of bigger castles on promise of giving him military service, that is to fight for him whenever need arose. In return the bigger one promised to protect the smaller one. And thus, step by step, this went up to bigger and yet bigger lords and nobles.[1] And, at the top of this feudal structure was the king, who in turn claimed the Divine Right.

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[1] Leo Huberman : Man's Worldly Goods, Peoples Publishing House, Bombay, 1946 ; p. 7.

Network Of Overlordship

This net-work of overlordship is well shown in the following extract from the records of an English court of Justice in 1279[2] : "Roger of St. Germain holds one mesuage (piece of land) from Robert of Bedford on the service of paying 3 d. to the aforesaid Robert from whom he holds, and of paying 6 d. to Richard Mylchester in place of the said Robert who holds from him. And the said Robert holds from Alan de Chartres, and pays him 2 d. a year, and Alan from Williams the Butler, and the same William from Lord Gilbert de Neville, and the same Gilbert from the Lady Devorguilla de Balliol, and Devorguilla from the King of Scotland, and the same King from the King of England." The church and the clergy were parts of this feudal system.[3] They were both priests and feudal lords. Thus, in

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[1] Thus, for example the Countess of Nevers declared in 1221 : "I, Matilda, have sworn upon the sacred gospels to my dearest lord, Phillip, by the grace of God the illustrious king of France, that I will do him good and faithful service against all living men and women, and that I will not marry except by his will and grace." (Ibid, pp. 10-11).

[2] Ibid; p. 8.

[3] See this grant of a fief to the Bishop of Beauvais in 1167: "I, Louis, by the grace of God King of the French, make known to all present, as well as to come, that at Maule, in our presence, count Henry of Champagne conceded the fief of Savigny to Bartholomew, Bishop of Beauvais, and his successors. And for that fief the said Bishop has made promise and engagement for one night, and justice and service to Count Henry; and he has also agreed that the Bishops who shall come after him will do likewise." (Ibid, p. 12).

Germany nearly half the land and wealth was in the hands of the bishops and abbots. The Pope was himself a feudal lord. The church, in the early period of feudalism, preserved a good deal of the culture of the Roman Empire, encouraged learning and education, but in course of time on account of a variety of factors, it became a part of the feudal set-up. In course of time the church became enormously wealthy, wealthier than many of the feudal barons, and its spiritual importance was outweighed by its economic one. And as a landlord it was no better, and even worse, than the other lords.

A regular ceremony[1] accompanied the grant of a fief, that is land held in feudal tenure. The future vassal did *homage,* kneeling, placing his hands between those of the lord, promising to become his *man,* to serve him with life and limb and worldly honour, faithfully and loyally, in consideration of the lands held under him. This was followed by an oath of *fealty* or fidelity, followed by the investiture, or actual conveyance of the land.

Nulle Terre Sans Seigneur

The population of Europe during this period, about ten centuries ago, was still small and the landowning class kept the labourer forcibly tied to the land. It was not land which was valued but the men who cultivated it. In references to transfers of land in the records of the period, boundaries are indicated only very roughly, e.g., from the river to the hill. But, on the other hand, a detailed enumeration is given of every peasant and artisan tied to the estate and his particular skill; the kind of work he is capable of performing; and the yearly services he must perform for his master are specified at length. Of land there was enough and to spare. But to ensure that the peasant remained tied to the lord and not take up a plot, the principle of *nulle terre sans seigneur* (no land without its lord) was proclaimed. It was, in fact, a fundamental precept of feudal law.

The European feudal system thus rested on personal servitude and on the personal attachment of the peasant to the soil. The peasant was, as it were, an appurtenance of the land, a part and parcel of it. Theoretically speaking, the lord should have protected the tenants, and in case of his failure to do so, the supreme lord, the king, should have checked him. In actual practice, each lord was a law unto himself, and the king never cared about it so long as he got his share from the lord's loot. The peasant by himself was too weak to resist the lord's demands. Not only was the peasant serf obliged to till the lord's field with his primitive implements; not only had he to cede to him and the church a substantial part of the crop gathered from his land; he had to pay a variety of other dues which, sometimes, even verged on the ridiculous.[1]

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[1] See C. D. Field's **Landholdings and the Relation of Landlord and Tenant in Various Countries,** Op. cit., p. 9.

The Effects Of The Growth Of Trade And Exchange

A change, however, came over in the later half of the XIIIth century. With the growth of exchange and trade, the relationship of the feudal structure came into contradiction with the economic foundation of society. The growing class of urban artisans and traders came into existence, not as part of the feudal system. They came into being as a result of the settled conditions the feudal system established in place of the disorder and chaos which obtained following the break-up of the Roman Empire. Trade grew as a result of the settled conditions, merchants became wealthy, and handicrafts flourished. The barons went to the merchants to borrow money. This they gave, securing some privileges in the bargain, and thus became yet stronger. The merchants and craftsmen organised into guilds, and round the guild halls or townhalls grew up towns and cities, which became rivals to the power of the feudal lord in the secluded castle.

But this development of trade had a different set of consequences for the lord's serfs. As long as the product taken from the tenant was directly consumed by the landlord and his retainers, the feudal exploitation was confined within comparatively narrow economic limits. There was no sense in the lord exacting from the peasants more than he could consume. But as exchange developed, there grew up the possibility of converting agricultural produce into a commodity. The lord began now to extort from the peasant an even larger portion of the products of his labour. His plight grew worse and worse and the feudal yoke became intolerable even for this dumb-driven creature.

The 'Black Death' And The Peasant Revolts

Things came to a head as a result of the great plague of 1348 A.D. It spread all over Europe, from Russia and Asia Minor to

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[1] C. D. Field has given the following examples which would be found amusing : "The tenant should keep a sparhawk; lift up his right hand yearly on Christmas Day towards the king; teach one hare-dog of the king; pay a yearly rent of one red rose garland and one barbed arrow with two rose-buds; pay three grains of pepper yearly; pay two shillings and fourpence, a pair of gloves and a half-pound of cummin-seed; pay a pair of white gloves; pay a snowball at mid-summer and a red rose at Christmas; service of one horse-comb; perform altogether and once a leap, a puff and a fart before our sovereign lord the king; hang upon a piece of forked wood the red deer that died of the murrain in the king's forest of Exmore; present a gammon of bacon on point of the lance; service of a pair of tongs; find a penny for the king for an oblation, if he should come to hear mass; to eat in lieu of all service; pay two white hairs annually at the feet of John the Baptist; bring two white capons before the king and say to him—'behold my lord these two white capons which you have another time but not now'; find a mad bull six weeks before Christmas. (*Ibid*, footnote p. 11) Certainly the *motoravans*, *hathiyavans*, *janmavans*, *pet-piravans* and *gramophoning* of the U. P. landlords of yore (See author's **Land Reforms in India**) pale into insignificance, if not in quantity, then **definitely in ludicrity.**

England. It was called the Black Death, and killed people by th million. This great calamity greatly reduced the population, an often there were not enough people to till the land. Due to scarcit of men, the wages of men tended to rise from their very low levels The landlords and rich men, however, were in control of the rulin machine, and they passed laws to force people to work at the ol miserable levels. Crushed and fleeced beyond endurance, the worn at last turned. The peasants revolted in an attempt to break thei shackles. These violent and spontaneous peasant revolts were feature of Europe, of Western Europe particularly, from the XII to the XIXth century, almost in an unbroken series.[1] Time an again these revolts were brutally suppressed and were drowned i blood, and yet they returned again and again with greater force They were mostly of a local nature, and assumed national revolutionary proportions in Germany only in the XVIth century, an in France during the Great French Revolution. These revolt achieved no notable success, except in France, and generally ende in defeat or could only induce such a redress of grievances as wa considered necessary to restore the confidence of the peasant i law and government. For the most part they resulted in bringin upon him more hideous misery and persecution in the form o punitive revenue exactions to pay for the great devastations brough upon the feudal lords and their castles. These revolts lef a legacy of bitterness and acrimony amongst those that survived They did, however, undermine the foundations of the feudal rul and are largely responsible for the ultimate end of the system i most of the European countries.

Peasant War In Germany

In his brilliant study of the development of capitalism,[2] Mauric Dobb ascribes the source of the collapse of feudalism to the excessiv exploitation of the peasants by the lords. The classic instance o this is to be found in Germany, and in order to complete this brie account of feudalism in Western Europe we have to go into thi specific development there. The growth of industry in German in the XIVth and XVth centuries, the development of trade and th rise of the merchant class as also the cities, and some other factors considerably changed the situation of classes emerging fro medieval times. Thus a rather changed situation obtained i Germany in the beginning of the XVIth century. New classes ha been formed besides the old ones. Out of the old nobility ha come the princes. They were independent of the Emperor and possessed sovereign rights. They maintained armies, levied taxes, declared war and made peace. Within their jurisdiction their reign was autocratic. The need of the princes for money grew with the taste for luxuries, with the increase of the courts and standing armies, and with the mounting costs of administration. And so taxes were imposed recklessly and money collected. The merchants and the cities where they lived were, however, free from these imposts by virtue of their strength, financial power and privileges earned by advancing loans to the princes.

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[1] For example, the Dalcina Rebellion in Italy, 1356; Rebellion of Jacquerie in Franc 1358; Rebellion of Wat Tyler in England in 1381, when Tyler was killed in fro of the English king; the Hussite movement in Bohemia; a series of peasant up risings in Germany, the most important being the Peasant War of 1525; in Hungar the rebellion of John Bardoshi in 1437 and of Cyogy Doysa in 1514.

[2] Maurice Dobb : **Studies in the Development of Capitalism, London, 1946.**

This loot of the princes was not the only oppression under which the German peasantry suffered. The lords who abounded in the medieval feudal hierarchy had undergone a transformation in the sense that either they had gone up and become independent princes or had sunk to the rank of the lower nobility, the knighthood. This had, however, not brought about any reduction in the luxuries and expenses of these castle barons; rather they had gone up with greater magnificence in tournaments, etc. Besides directly taxing and fleecing his own peasants, the prince imposed indirect taxes on these knights. To satisfy the mounting requirements, the knights, besides resorting to all the impositions of the prince in his area, went one better in their dexterity of robbing their serfs and bondsmen, who were wrung dry. On every possible occasion they were burdened with ever new payments of various descriptions. Serf labour, dues, ground rents, land rate taxes, death taxes, protection money, and so on, were increased at will in spite of old agreements. Over and above this, all tricks and machinations of the financial system were adopted. Coin manipulations of the barest kind were resorted to. One carried depreciated money; another set a higher or lower rate of legal tender most convenient for the prince. Administration of justice also became a source of regular income and also satisfied the appetites of magistrates and bailiffs.

And then there was the clergy, the high church dignitaries, represented by the bishops, archbishops, abbots, friars and other prelates. In no manner less reckless than the knights and the princes in the exploitation of serfs and bondsmen, their methods were even more shameless. Besides the brutal force, they utilised all intrigues of religion, like the horror of ex-communication, or refusal of absolution. Trade in indulgence, manufacture of miracle-producing saint effigies and relics, and a host of other tricks were employed; religion and religious faith was actually turned into a trade to squeeze and extract the last penny from the peasants.

At the top of this church hierarchy was the Pope. What the Emperor was to the princes and the nobility, the Pope was to the clergy. The emperor received the "common money", the imperial taxes. The Pope received the general church taxes, out of which he defrayed the expenses of the luxurious Roman court. Due to the power and the number of the clergy in Germany, the Pope's taxes were collected here with greater severity than in any other country. As the demands of the Roman court grew, even larger sums of money were yearly transported from Germany to Rome.

Carolina—The Holy Roman Empire's Order Of Penal Law

Crushing as these burdens were, the occasional feuds and minor wars between knights and princes, wars between the princes and the Emperor, further brought devastation upon them. And thus the peasants carried the burden of all the other strata of society.[1] The peasantry was forced and coerced into submission to the criminal code of the times, called the *Carolina.* It was published under Emperor Charles V in 1532 and was also called Emperor Charles Vth's and Holy Roman Empire's Order of Penal Law. It seems to have existed in the XVth century as well, and earlier, but in 1532 it was properly codified. Torture as a means of examining the defendant was given an important place in it. Its other chapters dealt with such punishments as 'cutting of noses', 'burning', 'cutting of ears', 'blinding', 'chopping of fingers', 'beheading', 'quartering', 'pinching with burning tongs', 'breaking on the wheel', etc. All these were fully made use of by the lords to squeeze and coerce the serfs and bondsmen. And this *Carolina* retained great importance till the XVIIIth century.

The peasant revolt in Germany was led by Martin Luther and another clergyman, Thomas Muensuer. Discontent among the peasantry had reached the bursting point, and Luther's declaration of war against the Catholic hierarchy set them into motion. About the year 1518, the peasantry formulated sixteen demands and demanded their acceptance. These included abolition of the hunting right, of serf labour, of excessive taxes and master privileges in general, protection against wilful arrests and partisan courts. Between 1518 and 1523 one peasant revolt followed another in Germany and in 1524-25 they assumed a nation-wide character. The clergy, who were the biggest landlords in Germany, suffered the most. Monasteries and endowments were burnt down, valuables plundered and sold into foreign countries. The nobility also suffered considerably, its castles destroyed and most respected families ruined. The peasantry, however, was ultimately crushed by the armies of the princes, thus bringing to end the bloodiest of peasant revolts the world has witnessed. The subsequent part of Martin Luther,[1] whose initial revolt against the Roman Catholic hierarchy ignited the rebellion, and other aspects of this bloody war is out of our purview.

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[1] F. Engels has thus described the condition of the German peasantry at this time : "Whether the peasant was the subject of a prince, an imperial baron, a bishop, monastery or a city, he was everywhere treated as a beast of burden, and worse. If he was a serf he was entirely at the mercy of his master. If he was a bondsman, the legal deliveries stipulated by agreement were sufficient to crush him, even they were being daily increased. Most of his time he had to work on his master's estate. Out of that which he earned in his few free hours, he had to pay tithes, dues, ground rents, war taxes, land taxes, imperial taxes, and other payments. He could neither marry nor die without paying the master. Aside from his regular work for the master, he had to gather litter, pick strawberries, pick bilberries, collect snail shells, drive the game for the hunting, chop wood, and so on. Fishing and hunting belonged to the master. The peasant saw his crop destroyed by wild game. The community meadows and woods of the peasants had almost everywhere been forcibly taken away by the masters. And in the same manner as the master reigned over the peasant's property, he extended his wilfulness over his person, his wife and daughters. He possessed the right of the first night. Whenever he pleased, he threw the peasant into the tower. Whenever he pleased, he killed him or ordered him beheaded." (**The Peasant War in Germany**, Peoples Publishing House, Bombay, pp. 11-12).

The Great French Revolution

We are discussing the question of the existence or otherwise of feudalism in India in the background of the continued existence of village communities here, and the views held out by some that feudalism was as much a development in Indian history as elsewhere. This discussion has led us to an investigation of feudalism in the West, of which the peasant revolts were a necessary corollary. We would later examine whether such revolts are to be traced in Indian History. In the West, however, talking of these peasant uprisings, mention may also be made of the Great French Revolution which destroyed feudalism decisively, and though led by the new class of merchants and traders, the *bourgeoisie* as it has been called, was essentially a peasant rebellion. The economic and legal conditions of the peasantry on the eve of the French Revolution may be summed up thus. The nobility and the clergy owned in some districts upto 51% of cultivated land. In certain other places this figure was only 13%. The peasants possessed 20% to 60% of the cultivated land. Thus land hunger was severe among the peasantry. A considerable section of rural population was landless. In some places they were about 86% of the population. In Lyons, nearly 45% of the peasant population had half-an-acre or even less of land. In Britanny, nearly 46% of peasant families had only 2 hectares per family.

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[1] Luther's shrewd suggestion that by getting rid of foreigners (the Pope and the church in Rome) the nobility could take over the lands and the treasures of the church in Germany got him the support of the nobles and princes, and then he went all out against the peasant rebels. On the peasant demand for the abolition of serfdom, Luther said : "This article would make all men equal and so change the spiritual kingdom of Christ into an external wordly one. Impossible ! An earthly kingdom cannot exist without inequality of persons. Some must be free, others serfs, some rulers, others subjects." He cursed the rebellious peasantry and called for their destruction. He said : "Therefore let all who are able hew them down, slaughter and stab them, openly or in secret, and remember that there is nothing more poisonous, noxious and utterly diabolical than a rebel. You must kill him as you would a mad dog; if you do not fall upon him, he will fall upon you and the whole land." And he assured the nobility : "If you are killed in this struggle, you are indeed to be felicitated, as no nobler death could befall anyone."

Therefore, not having enough lands, the tenants were obliged to rent them from landlords at extremely high rates. A tax was taken if the allotment plot passed to other hands by sale or inheritance. Tolls were taken for taking grain for sale to the market. It was obligatory for the peasant to have his corn ground at the lord's mill. The courts were entirely in the hands of the lords. Hunting was their sole prerogative. A special tax for the church tithes had to be paid even before the harvest was garnered. Taxes to the State, both direct and indirect, were heavy. Direct taxes alone amounted to 50% of the total income of the peasant. Every peasant had to compulsorily give 12 days in the year for road service. Under such conditions, it is not surprising that the number of beggars in France stood at one and a half million, and in bad years nearly one fourth of the population lived on alms. Reduced to such a state, the peasants began to express their discontent. They demanded :

(i) Abolition of feudal services;
(ii) Reduction and equalisation of taxation;
(iii) Abolition of tithes;
(iv) Restitution of common lands which had been siezed by the landlords.

In the beginning of 1789, on the eve of elections to the *States General*, the peasants refused to carry out various services imposed upon them by the landlords. The conflict intensified in the summer of 1789, when armed detachments of the peasantry marched to the castles of the barons demanding the surrender of the paper and deeds on which their feudal claims were based. If the papers were surrendered, immediately they were burnt, otherwise the castles were stormed. These uprisings were looked upon with displeasure by the National Assembly and it condemned the violent actions of the peasantry. On August 11, 1789, however, the National Assembly decreed the abolition of those services which were taken as part of the personal dependence of the peasants. The surrender of all other more valuable services was to be compensated. The date and the order of abolition was not fixed and the terms of compensation were extremely burdensome. The peasantry remained dissatisfied and there were armed conflicts between them and the troops at various places. As a result of the pressure of the peasantry and the recalcitrance of the nobility, who refused to make any concessions to the new class of merchants and traders, the *bourgeoisie*, the Assembly issued a decree confiscating the property of the *emigree* aristocrats, and another decree for the sale of their land in small allotments. At last the power passed into the hands of the Jacobins. Following this, on July 17, 1793, all feudal rights and services were abolished. All the common lands which had been confiscated by the landlords were restored and permitted to be distributed. Thus it was that France was converted into a country of small peasant owners.

CHAPTER V

SLAVERY, FEUDALISM, AND VILLAGE COMMUNITIES IN INDIA AND THE WEST (II)

> *"The agrarian system was based on a co-operative or collective village....There was no theocratic monarchy in India. In Indian polity if the king is unjust or tyrannical, the right to rebel against him is admitted. What the Chinese philosopher, Mencius, said two thousand years ago might apply to India: 'When a ruler treats his subjects like grass and dirt, then the subjects should treat him as a bandit and an enemy.' The whole conception of monarchical power differed from European feudalism, where the king had authority over all persons and things in his domain. This authority he delegated to lords and barons who vowed allegiance to him. Thus a hierarchy of authority was built up. Both the land and the people connected with it belonged to the feudal lord and, through him, to the king. This was the development of the Roman conception of dominium. In India there was nothing of this kind. The king had the right to collect certain taxes from the land and this revenue-collecting power was all that he could delegate to others. The peasant in India was not the lord's serf. There was plenty of land available and there was no advantage in dispossessing the tenant. Thus in India there was no landlord system, as known in the West, nor was the individual tenant the full owner of his patch of land. Both these concepts were introduced much later by the British with disastrous results."*[1]
>
> —*JAWAHARLAL NEHRU*

WE will now attempt a discussion of the existence or otherwise of the slave institution in India, and its form and nature. It is clear that no "yes and no" answer can be given to the question. It is also plain that the subject cannot be justly treated in the brief space that we can allot for the discussion. Limitations of the author's knowledge of the staggering bulk of ancient Indian literature is another factor. The task is rendered more difficult because the vast ancient literature, the *Vedas,* the *Brahmanas* and the *Upanishads,* etc., sometimes propound and uphold contradictory opinions and, in the final analysis, in the absence of concrete historical evidence, whatever conclusions are arrived at can be questioned and assailed.

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[1] **Discovery of India,** Op. cit., p. 289.

Dasa And *Dasyus* In Ancient Sanskrit Texts

The ancient Greeks justified their rule over slaves on the ground that the bulk of the slaves were people of a different breed. This is what, for example, Aristotle said. He divided people into categories, one appointed by nature to rule over the other, whom nature had destined to be slaves. Chernyshevsky has said[1]: "Slave-holding interests were not the only source of the opinion that prevailed among the Greeks (and the Romans) that nature had appointed some people to be slaves, just as they themselves had been appointed to be free. Vanity can be unselfish; the advocates of slavery in the world of antiquity held this opinion not only because it was profitable, but also out of vanity." In ancient Sanskrit texts, in the cosmic account of the origins of the four *Varnas,* the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas and the Shudras, the last one are represented as having arisen out of the two feet of the creator.[2] In the first account of their origin elsewhere they are described as a powerless, miserable and timid people always engaged in servile occupations. But when the creator revised the whole scheme of social functions, he assigned them craftsmanship and manual labour as their chief functions. In the story of King Prithu, the first three *Varnas* are asked to pay homage to him and the Shudra is not mentioned. In connection with King Yayati, another powerful early Aryan king, the Shudras are mentioned as distinct from *Dasyus*. The king entertained the Shudras with favour and the *Dasyus* with proper supervision. Then again is the story of king Mahanandin, who had a son Mahapadma through a Shudra woman. This Mahapadma destroyed the power of all Kshatriyas and was the sole ruler of the world.[1]

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[1] N. G. Chernyshevsky : **Selected Philosophical Essay,** Moscow, 1953; p. 201.

[2] The original text is as follows :

ब्राह्मणोऽस्य मुखमासीत् बाहू राजन्यः कृतः । उरूस्तदस्य यद्वैशः पद्भ्यां शूद्रोऽजायत ॥

(Rig. 10|90|11; Yajur 31|11)

It has been translated thus by the Orthodox commentators : "The Brahmin was produced out of the mouth of Brahma or God, the Kshatriya from his arms, the Vaishya from his belly and the Shudra from his feet." This translation is, however, contested. The correct translation is held out as follows : "The Brahmin is or was his head, the Kshatriya has been made his arms, the Vaishya is what is his belly and the Shudra has been made as his feet." (See article entitled "Vedic Varna Vyavastha and Modern Socialism" by Shri Ganga Prasad, Retd. Chief Judge, Jaipur, in the monthly magazine **Vedic Digest,** Vol. I, No. 5 of May 1955. This interpretation is further supported by other references and may be perused with profit).

We may be permitted another remark. The fact of the Shudra being produced from God's feet is by itself not held in any way derogatory as Ganges, the highly sacred and worshipped river to India, is supposed to come from the same source. Rashtrakavi Maithili Sharana Gupta, the acknowledged poet of modern Hindi poetry, has called the Shudras as brothers of the river of Gods, i.e., the Ganges. His poem is :

उत्पन्न हो तुम प्रभु पदों से, जो सभी को ध्येय हैं ॥
तुम हो सहोदर सुरसरी के, चरित जिसके गेय हैं ॥

(Bharat-Bharati, Bhavishyata Khand 23)

Besides the Shudras, the ancient texts refer to *Dasa* and *Dasyus*, and the frequent use of this word and the imprecations[2] against them in Vedic texts has led to the widespread notion that they were slaves. This position is stoutly contested by eminent scholars and authorities. Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji, President of the West Bengal Legislative Council, and one of the greatest living linguists, says that *Dasa* and *Dasyu* are the tribal names of people inhabiting the Punjab and Sindh when the Aryans came to India, and they, the Aryans, called them by this very name.[3] Prof. V. M. Apte says:[4] "The translation of the word *Dasa* by 'slave' has led to the misconception that the conquered aborigines, both male and female, 'were enslaved'. *Dasa* does mean a 'life-long servant', but the horrors associated with the term 'slavery' are not to be thought of in this connection. There is no recorded instance in the *Rig-Veda* or later literature of the harsh or cruel treatment of a *Dasa* or *Dasi*, which is generally associated with slavery."

It is obvious that for a clear answer to the existence or otherwise of slavery in India we have to go into the relationships that developed between the incoming Aryans and those who inhabited India at the time. Now 2,500 B.C. is generally accepted as the date of *Rig-Veda*, and when they came here the Mohenjo-Daro civilisation (placed between 3250-2750 B.C. by Dr. Radha Kumud Mookerji)[5] was flourishing and there was a conflict between the two. Passages in the *Rig-Veda* refer at many places to this Aryan and non-Aryan conflict. The earth is described as having become the burial ground of *Dasas*; Indra storming towns and destroying the troops of the black *Dasas;* the slaughter of 50,000 black-complexioned enemies on the battle-field; the slaughter of another 30,000 elsewhere; the blockade of 100 cities of the non-Aryan Vangrida by Rijisvan in his fight against the 'dusky brood' *(krishnagarbhah).* And it is apparent that in this fight with the *Dasas,* it was not smooth-sailing for the Aryans. In a prayer in *Rig-Veda,* Indra is thus implored : "We are surrounded on all sides by *Dasyu* tribes. They do not perform sacrifices; they do not believe in anything; their rites are different; they are not men ! O destroyer of foes! Kill them. Destroy the *Dasa* race."[1]

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[1] This para is based on D. R. Patil's **Cultural History from the Vayu Purana**, Op. cit., pp. 37-38.

[2] Some of these are : Speaking a strange language *(mridhravak)*, not following Vedic rituals *(akarman)*. gods *(adevayu)*, devotion *(abrahman)*, sacrifices *(ayajvan)* or ordinances *(avrata)*, but following their own system *(anyavrata)*, and that they are phallus-worshippers *(sisnadevah)*.

[3] See **Interrelations of Cultures**, a UNESCO publication, published by the United Nations in 1953, being a collection of contributions from scholars of different countries. Dr. Chatterji says that the tribal names *Dasa* and *Dasyu*, in later Sanskrit "became degraded in meaning to mean respectively *slave* and *robber*—names which were also known in Iran (as *Daha* and *Dahyu*—in Iran *Daha* occurs as a tribal name, and *dahyu* became a common noun meaning "countryside", originally "the land inhabited by the *Dahyu* people)." Dr. Chatterji adds : "This shows the prevalence of the same Dravidian groups in Iran as in north-western India. Later, the name *Dramida* or *Dravida* (primitive Dravidian *Dramiza)*, which was used in a narrow sense for the extreme southern group of this people, was extended in a general way to mean all Dravidian-speaking peoples." (p. 169).

[4] **History and Culture of the Indian People Vol. I, The Vedic Age**, Op. cit., p. 355.

[5] See Dr. Mookerji's **Hindu Civilisation**, Bombay, 1950, p. 26.

Slavery, A Recognised Institution

It is thus clear that the Aryans met the stiffest opposition from the *Dasas* or *Dasyus,* who were actually what we know as the Dravidians.[2] Besides them, who were the most numerous and possessed of a highly developed civilisation, the Aryans came in touch with other inhabitants of India, the Negritos, the Proto-

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[1] Ibid, p. 72.

[2] The Dravidians have been called the mystery race of the world, as their origin has not yet been finally fixed. The commonly accepted theory is that they came from 'the west', after the Proto-Australoids of Austrics. Among them too several slightly different ethnic elements were found—the early Mediterranean, the late Mediterranean, the Oriental and the Armenoid. Says Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji : "The main group appears to have been an East Mediterranean people allied to the pre-Hellenic Aegeans and also to the Etruscans or Tuscans of Central Italy, who originally migrated from Asia Minor, and certain other Asian or Asia Minor people. The Mediterraneans in all likelihood brought the primitive form of speech which subsequently became transformed into the present day Dravidian languages and dialects of India." (**Interrelations of Cultures,** Op. cit., p. 168). Tamil is the most ancient of the Dravidian languages, and it would be noted with interest that the Cretans (the pre-Hellenic Aegeans) were known to the Greeks as *Termilai,* also *Trmmile.*

Dr. Radha Kumud Mookerji holds a similar opinion : "They (the Dravidians) came from the north-west, where they left traces of their language among the Brahmi (who themselves regard the remains of Mohenjo-Daro as the work of their ancestors), and brought with them the ancient cultures of Mesopatamia, Asia Minor and the Eastern Mediterranean." (**Hindu Civilisation,** Op. cit., p. 38). Dr. Sampurnanand, in his study **Aryon Ka Adi Desh** (referred to by us in Chapter II) has given in an appendix the findings of an interesting study by B. Chokkalingam Pillai in his work **The Origin of the Indo-European Races & Peoples**. According to Mr. Pillai, the Indo-Europeans are really two races, the Suran and the Velan, who lived ten thousand years ago in a continent, the Gondwana, which extended from East Africa to Malaya, the area at present covered by the Indian Ocean. Here the Surans and the Velans fought deadly battles. 7,500 years ago Gondwana went down the sea & the Surans consequently came towards India & went up to European Russia, followed by the Velans. One branch of the Velans remained in India and are really the ancestors of the Dravidians. The other branch of the Velans continued to fight the Surans, always had the better of them. The Surans spread over to Europe and Asia but everywhere the Velans pursued them. The battle lasted for 2,000 years and in the process there was much intermingling of languages, customs and thought . Pillai holds that Velans are the ancestors of Celts, Teutons, Letts, etc., and the descendents of the Surans are the Latin, Greek, Irani and Aryan (Indian) peoples. Roughly speaking, the Ṣuran language resembled the Sanskrit and Velan present-day Tamil.

Australoids, the Melanesians and the Mongolians, who came to be here under varying circumstances and lived in different parts. References to this conflict in the *Vedas,* almost always, refers to the Dravidians as the *Dasa* and *Dasyus.* And slavery in India apparently developed following their defeat at the hands of the Aryans. Dr. R. C. Majumdar says :[1] "Slavery was a recognised institution of Indian society from earliest times. The *Smritis* not only distinguish between different classes of slaves but lay down various rules regarding their status. According to Manu and Narada, slaves could be acquired by birth in the master's house, by purchase, by gifts, by inheritance, by maintenance during famine, by pledge, by release from a heavy debt, by capture in war, by gain in wager, by voluntary surrender of freedom, by apostasy from asceticism, by connextion with a female slave, and by several other processes. Slavery was also the judicial punishment for crime."

There exist clear evidence of slaves being bought and sold. Thus, Visvamitra's wife, at a time when the sage was practising severe penance, tied a string to the neck of her middle-most son and sold him, at a time of famine, for hundred cows so as to enable her to support the rest of her children. Again, the prize which King Janaka announced to the learned winner in his *Asvamedha* included, among other things, such as cows, gold, etc., slaves also.[2] Referring to the Shudras, the *Aitereya Brahmana* says that he is a "servant of another to be expelled at will" and "to be slain at will." The *Pancavimsa Brahmana* says that even if he is prosperous, he cannot but be servant to another and that his business is to wash the feet of his master.[3] From this the obvious reference is that slave could possess property and even be prosperous. But here we come up against Manu's injunction that a slave is not entitled to any property.[4]

Slaves Had Personal Rights

Some other factors must be noticed. The slaves, in spite of all disabilities, were not without personal rights. Manu directs that the master should not quarrel with the slave, his parents, wife. children, etc. Not only this, Manu directs that the master should bear the offence of his slave, who is his 'shadow'. Narada directs that a debt contracted by the slave for household benefit is binding upon the master. And Yajnavalkya and Narada lay down liberal rules for the emancipation of slaves. Thus a slave saving a master's life when in peril, is forthwith released and becomes entitled to a son's share. Persons sold and captured by a robber and those enslaved by forcible means are to be emancipated by law. The master could release at his pleasure slaves born in his house, received as gifts, or obtained by inheritance.

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[1] **History and Culture of the Indian Peoples, Vol. II, The Age Of Imperial Unity;** p. 570. It would be noted that we have quoted Prof. V. M. Apte from Vol. I of this very History series, wherein he does not agree with Dr. Majumdar. This quite clearly underlines the differences existing on the question.

[2] D. R. Patil : **Cultural History from the Vayu Purana,** Op. cit., p. 39.

[3] Ibid; p. 150.

[4] See Dr. R. C. Majumdar : **The Age of Imperial Unity,** Op. cit., p. 570.

Slavery And The Caste System: A *Mahabharata* Anecdote

Alongside are found some other instances which throw a flood of light on the times. The great sage Parasara had a son born of Satyavati, daughter of a fisherman, a *Daseyi* (or female slave). And this son was no other than the great Vedavyas, who is supposed to have arranged the four Vedas. Satyavati herself became the wife of a powerful Aryan king, Shantanu. There are instances of Brahmins being degraded to the level of Shudras, and Shudras rising up to be Brahmins.[1] As a matter of fact this entire development of the caste system in India, its getting rigid and stereotyped is a later development.[2] In this connection we will recount briefly an important and instructive story from the *Mahabharata*. In the period of their exile, the Pandavas were roaming in the Himalayas. One day Bhima, the most powerful, went out to hunt game for their food. At one place he was caught by a huge python, which was so powerful that Bhima, with all his strength of ten thousand elephants, could not move. The python revealed that he was King Nahusha, an ancestor of the Pandavas, that through his piety he went to heaven and got a seat aside Indra, but he became bloated, ill-treated certain *Rishis* and was thereby cursed and fell from the heavens to the present python-incarnation. He further said that the sages, when he wept and prayed for mercy, said that if any person answered some questions correctly, then he would be freed from this cursed life and go back to heaven. So he asked Bhima to answer those questions, else he would eat him as he was very hungry. While these talks were on, Yudhisthira came there in search of his younger brother. To Yudhisthira's entreaties to release his brother, the python Nahusha repeated all that he had told Bhima and then Yudhisthira agreed to answer those questions.

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[1] K. M. Munshi says: "The Brahmin was the head of the hierarchy but a Shudra could become a Brahmin, and a Brahmin devoid of his culture could sink into a Shudra. In those, as in later days, neither Brahmin nor Kshatriyas stuck, one and all to their prescribed functions. A Brahmin sometimes did the job of a soil-digger, a hunter or a menial, a wagon-driver and also a snake-dancer; a Kshatriya was a potter; a Vaishya a tailor." (Foreword to **The Age of Imperial Unity**, p. xxi.)

[2] We would like to quote the following observations on the Indian caste system from a paper entitled **Feudalism in India: Some Preliminary Notes**, presented by Dr. Daniel Thorner of the Department of Economic and South Asia Regional Studies, University of Pennsylvania, to a conference on the Problem of Uniformities in History, held by the American Council of Learned Societies Fall, 1950: "Whenever any single aspect of caste is investigated, or whenever the operation of caste at any given moment is studied, caste almost invariably turns out to be a looser and more flexible arrangement than one might expect. There would appear to be ground for suspecting that there commonly existed a wide gulf between the strictures on caste laid down in successive Hindu law books and the actual functioning of caste in everyday life. Caste may always have been a less strict and more irregular phenomenon than we have been led to believe." Dr. Thorner then gives a summary of Max Weber's findings on Indian Caste System. "Max Weber in his account of Indian social structure made a striking observation bearing upon this topic. He held that the triumph of caste in India was to be attributed to the Moslem conquest of northern India from the eleventh century onwards. For in their conquest the Moslems destroyed the power of the military and princely orders of Hindu society. Within the Hindu-fold, therefore, the strength of the chief rivals and restrainers of the Brahmins was broken. It was under Islamic domination, Weber contends paradoxically, that the authority of the Brahmins grew to unprecedented dimensions, carrying with it a marked tightening of the caste-structure."

The importance of the questions, therefore, is self-evident. On a correct answer to them depended the salvation of one accursed and his flight back to heaven. Now let us see the questions and answers[1] :

The Python : Who is a Brahmin and what is it most essential for him to know ?

Yudhisthira : A Brahmin is one who is possessed of the qualities of truth, charity, forgiveness, modesty, is human, carries on *tapa,* and is kind; he knows *Brahma,* the ultimate reality. And, O Python ! the only thing worth knowing is *Parabrahma,* after which man becomes free from all sorrow. Now you pose your questions.

The Python : O Dharmaraj ! The all-correct *Vedas* wish well of all the *Varnas.* The qualities of truth, charity, forgiveness, humanity, non-violence, kindness are to be seen in Shudras as well. Then what is the distinction between a Brahmin and a Shudra?

Yudhisthira : O Python ! A Shudra possessed of aforesaid qualities of truth, etc. is not a Shudra. And a Brahmin devoid of those qualities is not a Brahmin. In short, the caste is not decided merely by heredity. O Python, a Brahmin who does not have in him the qualities of truth, etc., is actually a Shudra. And a Shudra possessed of these qualities is really a Brahmin.

Caste Was Based On *Karma* (Action)

That this is the correct answer is borne out by the fact that Nahusha was freed from his python life and went back to heaven.

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[1] We have translated these from the original Hindi as given in an epic publication entitled **Sachitra Hindi Mahabharat**, published by the Indian Press, Allahabad, in 40 Volumes, in the course of nearly four years, nearly twenty years ago. The text occurs in **Vana Parva**, Chapter 120, p. 1060.

In the course of this most interesting and instructive dialogue, this point of caste not being decided by heredity is further explained; we have given the most relevant portions only.[1] This same point is borne out in two other references in the *Mahabharata:* "There is no distinction of castes; this whole world is created by God. Having been first created by God, it becomes divided into *Varnas* or classes accordng to their actions."[2] Or, again: "Neither by family nor by birth but by actions does a man become a Brahmin. Even if a *Chandal* possesses a good character, he is a Brahmin, O Yudhisthira."[3] Manu also says: "A Shudra can be elevated to the state of Brahmin and a Brahmin can be degraded to the state of a Shudra. Similarly, a man born of the Kshatriya parents or Vaishya parents may be elevated or degraded (according to his actions)."[4] That this principle generally held the ground right up to the Turkish invasions is borne out by a *Shloka* in *Shukra-Nitisar*, which means: "It is not by birth that a man becomes a Brahmin or a Kshatriya, or a Vaishya, or a Shudra, or even a *Mlechcha.* All are divided by their qualities and actions."[5] And, most important, in *Geeta,* the great book of Hindu religion and philosophy, the castes have been recognised to grow from functions, as distinct from heredity.[6]

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[1] There is an equally clear and categorical reference in *Mahabharata.* During the last years of their sojourn in forests, in Dvaitavana, all Yudhisthira's brothers one by one, refused to heed the voice of an invisible one *(Yaksha)* and proceeded to quench their thirst from a tank, and fell down dead. When Yudhisthira went there in search of them, the *Yaksha* warned him too not to proceed to drink the tank water before answering his questions. It is a most interesting dialogue. The portion relevant for our purposes is extracted below, Yudhisthira's answers were, of course, correct, and all his brothers came back to life.

The Yaksha: Tell me, O King, of what does Brahminhood really consist, of descent, of the way of life, of the reading of the *Veda,* or of erudition?

Yudhisthira: Listen, dear Yaksha! Brahminhood is based neither on descent, on the reading of the *Veda,* nor on erudition, but solely on a good life; or this there can be no doubt. The Brahmin must pay more attention to the ordering of his life than to all else; so long as his good life is unimpaired, he himself is unimpaired; if his good life is ruined, he himself is ruined. Those who learn and teach and meditate on the sciences are fools if they humour the passions. The wise man is he who does his duty.

(From **A History of Indian Literature** by M. Winternitz, Vol. 1. Translated from the original German by Mrs. Ketkar, University of Calcutta, 1927).

[2] नविशेषोऽस्ति वर्णानां सर्वंब्राह्ममिदंजगत् । ब्रह्मणा पूर्वं सृष्टंहि, कर्मणा वर्णतां गतम् ।। (Shanti Parva)

[3] न कुलेन न जात्या वा, क्रियाभिर्ब्राह्मणोभवत् ।
चांडालोऽपि हि वृत्तस्थो ब्राह्मणः स युधिष्ठिर ।। (Ibid)

[4] शूद्रो ब्राह्मणतामेति, ब्राह्मणश्चेति शूद्रताम ।
क्षत्रियाज्जातमेवंतु, विद्याद् वैश्यात् तथैव च ।। (10|65)

[5] न जात्याब्राह्मणश्चात्र, क्षत्रियो वैश्य एव न ।
न शूद्रो न च वै म्लेच्छो भेदिता गुण कर्मभिः ।। (Shukra-Nitisar)

[6] चातुर्वर्ण्यं मया सृष्टं गुण-कर्म-विभागशः । (4|13)

Two points thus clearly emerge : one, that slavery in some form did obtain in the early years of Aryan settlement in India; two, that caste was certainly not a stereotyped feature of ancient Indian society, as it is found later.

Process Of Fusion And Intermingling After The Early Aryan-Dravidian Wars

The existence of the slave institution was a direct consequence of the wars between the original inhabitants and the incoming Aryans,[1] in which certainly the Aryans had the better of it. As happened elsewhere, in every country, the defeated ones were enslaved, but this enslavement cannot be traced to or linked with the caste system. It is also clear that alongside fighting the wars, the Aryans began actively to settle in villages and till the land. From the earliest times their use of land was based on village community life, on ownership in common. Both, in agriculture, as also in their village organisation, they learnt from Dravidian methods and pattern. Dr. Chatterji is quite definite. He says :[2] "It was their (the Dravidian) way of life that was gradually adopted by the Aryans."

This was quite natural and inevitable. The Aryans, as Will Durant has remarked, were a people noted for their quick adaptability and acclimatization to new surroundings—their constant movement before final settlement in India made them so—and their great capacity to learn from new experiences and adopt and modify them for their purposes. And culturally backward as they were compared to the Dravidians, who in turn were possessed of a highly developed culture, it was inevitable that after the initial hostilities and wars, when these nomadic people finally settled down and accepted India as their motherland, the process of amalgamation with the original inhabitants should commence. The Aryans did not keep themselves as a caste apart, and there was no attempt at extermination of the conquered foe. Indeed, as Dr. Radha Kumud Mookerji remarks :[3] "There was also inevitably at work a process of fusion between the Aryan and non-Aryan by inter-marriage or by alliance." The process of expansion of the Aryan peoples, which occupied a millennium, was also a process of great commingling of races and cultures, the like of which can hardly be found anywhere else.[1] The culture of the Mediterraneans and Armenoids in India, the *Dasas* and *Dasyus,* can well be called pre-Vedic Hinduism, anticipating some of the characteristics of later Hinduism. The Dravidian ritual of *Puja* with water and flowers became more common and pronounced than the Aryan *homa.* Rudra worship, that is worship of God Shiva, which has definitely been established as the religion of the Mohenjo-Daro people, and which is unknown in *Rig-Veda,* almost replaced the early Aryan Gods, like Indra, Varuna, etc. And, this impact had another set of consequences for the new society that was gradually but surely coming up. The Harappa civilisation, like most of its contemporaries in Western Asia, was priest-dominated, and the *Pujari* of the Rudra, if anything, contributed to the strength of the Brahmins over the Kshatriyas.[2]

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[1] In Manu (VIII-415), seven kinds of slaves are enumerated : Those who are captured in the field (during war) *(dhvajahrita)*, those who serve in return for maintenance (*bhaktadasa*), those that are bought (*krita*), those that are received as gifts *(datrima)*, those that are inherited from the father (*paitrika*); and those that are made slaves by way of punishment *(dandadasa)*.

[2] **Interrelations of Cultures,** Op. cit., pp. 169-170.

[3] **Hindu Civilisation,** Op. cit., p. 71.

The Conflict Between Vashishta And Vishwamitra

This conflict leading to subsequent understanding and living together is explained by different scholars in different ways. The conflict between the two sages Vashishtha and Vishwamitra[3] is supposed to represent the first phase. And, finally, the admission of Vishwamitra[4] in the Brahmin-fold, prior to which he, through his great power and piety, started the creation of another universe, represents the final fusion of and understanding between the two cultures. Indeed, the fact that our ancients, in spite of their great attributes and intellectual bigness, showed no consideration for preserving their history has been regarded as deliberate and purposive. Dr. Chatterji has made the following profound observation on the subject:[5] "There was perhaps in ancient India a deliberate policy of deprecating history as a depository of national or tribal achievements compared with other peoples, as such a glorification of history would act as a deterrent to the fusion of different ideological elements into one single culture-group."

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[1] Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji says : "There started from the beginning a large-scale miscegenation—mingling in blood as well as mingling of cultures and religions. The myths and traditions of the Dravidian and Austric-speakers were translated into the new Aryan languages, Sanskrit and the early Prakrits, and later found a place in those composite works....which are represented by the **Puranas** and the **Mahabharata.**" (**Interrelations of Cultures;** Op. cit., p. 173).

Indeed, linguistic studies have tended to establish that the Sanskrit script, in which the **Vedas** are found, derive from the symbols found on the seals discovered at Mohenjo-Daro. As early as 1867, Mr. E. Thomas suspected that the Aryans invented no alphabet of their own in the course of their wanderings, but depended on the country in which they settled for the script by which they could reduce their speech to writing. Prof. Langdon's researches, 60 years later, established that "The Aryans Sanskritists gave values derived from their language to these characters (i.e. the Mohenjo-Daro seal ones). In other words, they knew their ideographic meaning, translated them into Sanskrit, and derived the syllabic values from the Sanskrit words." (See **Hindu Civilisation,** p. 38).

[2] See **Pre-historic India** by Stuart Piggot (Professor of Pre-historic Archaeology in Edinburg University, A Pelican Book, London, 1950; pp. 286-287.

[3] In the war of the Ten kings referred to in **Rig-Veda,** in which the entire Rig-Vedic India, including the non-Aryans, was involved, had Vishwamitra as the adviser on one side and Vashishtha on the other.

This Vishwamitra, it would be noted with interest, had a daughter born of Menaka, an Aryan woman, called Shakuntala, whose son Bharat, from a powerful Aryan King Dushyanta, became a mighty and *Chakravarti* monarch, after whom, some hold, India came to be called *Bharatvarsha,* i.e. the land of Bharat.

[5] **Interrelations of Cultures,** Op. cit., pp. 176-177.

The Two Stages Of Slavery

This discussion can well be endless and so we would rather cut it short. What is obvious is that after the first conquest and enslavement, once fusion and inter-mingling set in and became normal, the conquered ones could no more remain as slaves, specially when their culture and way of life was to a very large extent adopted by the Aryans. And so while we find in India evidence of the first stage of slavery, the second stage does not seem to appear, and India follows a distinctive pattern of a different type.

To further clarify our ideas, let us look at the two stages of slavery in the West—the early and the mature. In a very recent study, George Thompson[1] points out that in the first stage slavery is patriarchal and directed towards the satisfaction of immediate needs rather than the production of commodities. Trade is poorly developed, cultural development is low, there exists a considerable class of small producers, consisting mainly of peasants, not yet driven from land, and the State is despotic. In the mature stage, however, due to the further development of productive forces, slavery is directed towards commodity production, and in the main spheres of production free labour is replaced by slave labour. "The small producers are inpoverished, and, with the further growth of trade, money relations, and private property, the number of privately owned slaves increases and predominates over the other categories."[2] In this mature stage, there comes into being "a slave-owning democracy," and cultural development is rapid.

This fact of the production of commodities for the market as a feature of the second stage of slavery has also been referred to by an Oriental scholar. Prof. H. K. Takahashi of Japan wrote an article in the Japanese journal *Keizai Kenkyu* (i.e. Economic Review) in April, 1951, which has been rendered in English in Fall 1952 (Vol. XVI, No. 4) issue of a London magazine, *Science and Society*. Prof. Takahashi's brilliant note is a contribution to the discussion of 'The

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[1] **Studies in Ancient Greek Society, Vol. II, The First Philosophers,** by George Thomson, London, 1955. In this able study wherein the author compares slavery and philosophy in Greek and Chinese history, he has left out India because of "chronological difficulties of Indian history." He, however, hopes that "With the spread of Marxism in India, these difficulties will be solved." Messrs. Avdiev and Osipov have apparently not solved it for Mr. Thomson.

[2] Ibid, p. 14.

Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism' (we shall have the occasion to refer to it later), but in passing he refers to "The products of the ancient Roman *latifundia* entering circulation as slave-produced commodities." This type of commodity production taking place under a despotic regime is, of course, taken for granted.

Despotism And Slave-Produced Commodities In India

Now let us see whether this is how the pattern developed in India. The point about the existence of despotic regimes is not borne out by evidences available. We have discussed this question in Chapter II, and though much more can be said, we would forbear. That kingship was elective, that the people could banish a king, and could recall a banished king, that the king was by elaborate ceremonies and oaths committed to loyalty to his people, that he confessed that disloyalty to people would mean his ruin—all these are well established facts. The ambition and rapacity of kings were controlled by traditions which were developed and later codified in *Smritis,* as also by the system of *Sabhas, Samitis, Parishads,* etc., which were very powerful.[1] And in this mature stage of slave society, whereas the Roman Empire had developed into the orgies of the Pantheon, and veritable human monsters like Nero disfigured its history, and slave-baiting, throwing them before hungry lions, and all the rest of it, became its marked feature, nothing like that can be found in Indian history. Even in the first phase of slavery in India, there does not appear to have existed any considerable slave trade or the treatment of the slave like an ox or a horse.

As for the question of slave-produced commodities, the remarks of Marx would be found very instructive. Says Marx :[2] "Occupying areas of from 100 to several thousand acres, each (village community) forms a compact whole producting all that it requires. The chief part of the products is destined for direct use by the community itself, *and does not take the form of a commodity.* Hence, production here is independent of that division of labour brought about in Indian society as a whole, by means of exchange of commodities. *It is the surplus alone that becomes a commodity,* and a portion of even that, not until it has reached the hands of the State, into whose hands from time immemorial a certain quantity of these products has found its way in the shape of rent in kind."

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[1] We are, however, conscious of the fact that from amidst the staggering plethora of stories, strayed in the *Vedas, Upanishads,* the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana,* etc., references contrary to this view can be cited by a controversialist, but, by and large, the position given here can hardly be assailed.

[2] Capital, Vol. I, Op. cit., p. 357.

Second Stage Of Slavery Absent In India: India's Distinctive Development

We thus find that both on the question of despotic regime, as also slave-produced commodities, which are the most pronounced features of slavery, India does not answer the test. We must, however, hasten to declare that when we say this, we are actuated by no spirit of narrow chauvinism or parochialism. What we feel is that attempts to fit Indian History in a set pattern may not always be the correct thing to do, and the subject requires more study and research, and much more anthropological and archaeological evidence than is available, before any final verdict can be given. As it is, the existence of slavery in the second phase is to be seriously questioned. The marks of a distinctive type of development in India are clearly discernible.

This distinctive feature is directly and inevitably a product of the intermingling which took place. "This basic fact of Hindu history, the presence from the very beginning as 'language-culture' groups of different peoples who somehow composed their racial differences and accepted a common cultural environment, brought about the spirit of tolerance and acceptance, which runs, like a thread through the beads of a chaplet, throughout the whole course of Indian culture down the centuries."[1] This distinctive feature as compared to the West may also be due to "the old Hindu conception of group being the basic unit of organisation, and the excessive individualism of the West, emphasising the individual above the group."[2] Of this Hindu conception Nehru further remarks:[3] "This structure was based on three concepts: the autonomous village community, caste, and the joint family system. In all these three, it is the group that counts; the individual has a secondary place." And again:[4] "All the three pillars of the Indian social structure were thus based on the group and not on the individual. The aim was social security, stability, and continuance of the group, that is of society. Progress was not the aim and progress therefore had to suffer. Within each group, whether this was the village community, the particular caste, or the large joint family, there was a communal life shared together, a sense of equality, and democratic methods."

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[1] Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji : **Interrelations of Cultures,** Op. cit., p. 177.

[2] Nehru : **Discovery of India,** Op. cit., p. 285.

[3] Ibid; p. 286. Soon after Nehru makes clear that "Caste has been essentially functional and similar to the medieval trade-guilds of Europe." Elsewhere too in his writings he has held that "originally there was a good deal of flexibility about it," and its rigidity is a later phase.

[4] Ibid, p. 297.

Group And The Individual In The West And India

This emphasis on the group, as against aggressive individualism and keen proprietary instinct in the West under the influence of Roman Jurisprudence, profoundly influenced subsequent developments. While under the Roman Law private property was emphasised and the sacredness of the creditor's rights over those of the debtors was held up, in Indian thought, it is remarkable, there is found no conception of one's rights; instead duties for the sake of duties is emphasised. This is the entire refrain of the teaching of Shri Krishna to Arjuna in the *Bhagwad-Geeta*. People worried more about their debts than their dues. An elaborate theory of man's debts was developed, the *Deva-rina* (debt to the forces of nature), the *Pitri-rina* (debt to parents and to society), and the *Rishi-rina* (debt to teachers, etc.). And it was laid down that in his lifetime, everyone must do his level best to pay of these *rinas* (debts).[1]

Differentiated Structures And Functions Of Indian Institutions

The absence of the mature stage of slavery is also to be traced to the specific relationship which developed between the State and society. The society, which was dominantly agricultural, was organised in village communities. We have referred to their organisation and their essentially democratic character. Here too evolution in India, after the initial tribal phase, was of a distinctive type. Dr. Radha Kumud Mookerji says that the early tribal communities were of the following types :

(a) As assemblies of elders, heads of families, etc., meeting on more or less equal terms to regulate common life.

(b) As constituted into central units under a single well-defined authority, generally an absolute head, such as the tribal head, patriarch, etc.

And Dr. Mookerji remarks : "The first type is characteristic of the so-called Aryan peoples and follows a line of evolution which in Europe developed into the democratic city-states, with further differentiation of functions and the control of particularist tendencies by the development of central organs and by means of segregation, geographical as well as cultural; while in India the type culminated in the democratic institutions for the expression of corporate life, rural and urban." As for the second type, which is characteristic of the Semitic peoples, it developed into the ancient monarchies of the Egyptian, Assyrian or the Babylonian type. And Dr. Mookerji goes on to observe: "The Indian institutions have developed differentiated structures and functions of their own, while the characteristic tendency of all tribal institutions (in the intermediate folk-stage) is to resolve into the single mass out of which they arise. Hence the councils of chieftains and elders in tribal communities, which are the repositories of tribal customs, derive their authority direct from the primary bodies which are presented *per capita* only and not by classes, as in the Indian assemblies and unions."

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[1] See article by B. L. Atreya entitled "Indian Culture : Its Spiritual, Moral and Social Aspects" in **Interrelations of Cultures**, Op. cit., pp. 123-157.

State And Society In India

As for the relationship which developed between the State and these village republics, in India we witness the unique phenomenon of their co-existence as distinct and separate units, as independent centres of national, popular, and collective life and activity. While in the West, State interference progressively extended to all sectors of social and national life, including the church in some cases, in India, on the other hand, the king was head of the State but never of society. He had a high place in the social hierarchy, but it certainly was not the highest.[1] Thus the State and village organisations in India "were independent organisms with distinct and well-defined structures and functions of their own and laws of growth and evolution. The limits of State-interference were accordingly so defined and fixed as not to encroach upon the sphere of activities of the social organisation. A policy of non-interference was recognised as the ideal policy of the State, the functions of which were ordinarily restricted to the irreducible minimum, viz., the protection of life and property and realisation of revenue for the proper execution of that duty. There was a well-understood delimitation of the respective boundaries of the political and social organisations, both of which were co-operating agencies for the co-operation of the commonweal."[2]

From what we have said above, it should certainly not be concluded that following the intermingling between the Aryans and the original inhabitants of India, slaves completely disappeared from India, that all was equality and goodness, and oppression and domination of one by another disappeared into thin air. We never mean that. To assert that would be sheer travesty of truth. On the contrary, there is definite evidence to show that in later centuries, in the period, for example, reflected in the *Jatakas,* that is the pre-Buddhist and early Buddhist Indian society, while renunciation of worldly wealth and comforts remained a prominent feature of social life, pomp and splendour and even despotism of local *rajans,* i.e., kings, is also noticed. In *Panchagam Jataka* (I. 470) we hear of a king sitting on "a throne ornamented with precious stones" whilst "sixteen thousand dancing girls skilled in dancing, singing and music, sang and played, so that the palace resounded like an ocean with the roar of which was mixed the noise of thunder."[1] The *Jatakas* also reveal an unrestrained tyrant "who oppresses and puts down his subjects by punishments, taxes, torture and robbery, as one pounds sugar in a sugar mill, who is as odious to them as a particle of dust in the eye, as a particle of sand in the rice or as a thorn that has pierced the hand." (II.240).[2] Alongside are found accounts of an angry people incited by a Brahmin, going out to depose an oppressive ruler. "With sticks and hammers they go out and beat the king and the *purohita* till they are dead." Other such instances are found.[3]

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[1] Dr. Mookerji says: "As the symbol of the State he appeared to the people like a remote abstraction with no direct touch with their daily life, which was governed by the social organisation. The points of contact between the State and the ordinary interests of the daily life of the people were indeed very few."

[2] Dr. Mookerji's these references have been taken from his Introduction to **Local Government in Ancient India**, both the first and the second editions.

The *Jatakas* also refer to the existence of slaves. A big Brahmin land-owner goes to his field for supervision of cultivation which is done by slaves and hired labourers. In *Kusa Jataka* the occupation of a cook is described as one to be practised by slaves or hired labourers. Indeed, big land-owners and rich tradesmen, according to Fick's study of the *Jatakas,* employed slaves and hired labourers. And in the house of a pious Brahmin, Dhammapala, even slaves and labourers give alms.[4]

We submit that in the mass of literature available about ancient India, many more such local particulars can be hunted out and cited, as also particulars of a contrary type. Thus, for example, as against the much propounded idea of development of despotism, we find a Buddhist monk Aryadeva exclaiming at a haughty king: "What is thy pride worth, O King, who art a (mere) servant of the *gana,* and receiveth the sixth part as wages."[5] To generalise about the slave system in India, on the basis of these stray, local particulars, is to lose sight of the organic inter-connections of cultural developments and is to miss the spontaneity and significance of specific variations which give body and shape to the generic experiences of the historical consciousness in particular environments. To assert that slave-produced commodities, which became the most pronounced feature of the second stage of slavery in the West, was also the dominant form of production in India, where there are incontrovertible signs of the first stage of slavery, is not to recognise how largely the origins of law and constitution in India are traceable to the earliest ideas of social values in India. And the peculiar relations which as a result developed between the State and society in India, explain the paradoxes of Indian History.

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[1] Richard Fick : **The Social Organisation in North East India in Buddha's Time,** Op. cit., p. 98.

[2] Ibid, p. 101.

[3] Ibid, pp. 103-104.

[4] Ibid, pp. 243, 288, 305.

[5] **History and Culture of the Indian People, Vol. II, The Age of Imperial Unity,** Op. cit., p. 305.

Opinions Of Foreign Visitors: Arrian And Megasthenes

These lapses, we feel, explain the bland declaration of Soviet interpreters of Indian History that slavery was the dominant feature of Indian social system till the time of the Guptas. But, much earlier, when Alexander invaded India, his historian Arrian had recorded a contrary opinion. Elphinstone says:[1] "Arrian mentions with admiration that every Indian is free. With them, as with the Lacedemonians, he says, no Indian can be a slave; but, unlike the Lacedemonians, they keep no other people in servitude." Rhys-Davids has quoted from Arrian's *Indica* the following opinion of Megasthenes :[2] "The same writer (i.e., Megasthenes) tells us this remarkable fact about India, that all the Indians are free and that not one of them is a slave." And Rhys-Davids himself has expressed his conclusions thus:[3] "...there were also slaves: individuals had been captured in predatory raids and reduced to slavery, or had been deprived of their freedom as a judicial punishment, or had submitted to slavery of their own accord Children born to such slaves were also slaves; and the emancipation of slaves is often referred to. But we hear nothing of such later developments of slavery as rendered the Greek mines, the Roman *latifundia*, or the plantations of Christian slave-owners, scenes of misery and oppression. For the most part the slaves were household servants, and not badly treated; and their numbers seem to have been insignificant."

Influence Of Buddha's Personality On Indian Social Life

Before we conclude this discussion, we would like to emphasise that, apart from a variety of factors enumerated, the great influence of Buddha's personality on Indian social life should not be forgotten or under-estimated. Buddha's sway over Indian life and people needs no repetition. In the social field Buddhism attempted to remove inequality and establish equality in its place. The caste system was not only opposed in theory but in real life; among the *bhikshus* and *bhikshunis*, people from every caste, from the highest Brahmin to the lowest *Chandal*, had an equal status. This is what Rahul Sankrityayan says:[1] "Casteism, although not destroyed, was considerably weakened. Even the strongest upholders of the caste system—the Brahmins—were influenced by the Buddhist doctrine of equality." And he opines that Buddha "tried to establish full communism in the *sanghas* (communes)". And then—this is important—Rahul says: "How could Buddha's communism and collectivism last for long when the whole of contemporary society was opposed to it? But many individuals were influenced and inspired by his teachings. We do not belittle the work of the utopian socialists but respect them for their service to socialism. In the same way the communism preached by Buddha has its own place."

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[1] Mountstuart Elphinstone : **The History of India**, 9th Edition, 1911, edited by E. H Cowell.

[2] **Buddhist India**, Op. cit., p. 173

[3] Ibid, p. 40.

An Asoka Stone Edict

Lastly, we would like to quote the following from an Asoka Stone-Edict, which certainly cannot come from a mighty satrap presiding over a slave-empire: "*Priyadarshi* King, the Beloved of the Gods says: Since many many days the administrative work is not carried on all the time, and I do not get reports from my informers at all hours. Therefore, I have so arranged that at all time, whether I be eating, or be with my queens, or resting, or in privy, or in journey, or in garden, at all places the reporters will come to me to give me news about the conditions of my people. At all places I will carry on the work of the people. If I order that a certain gift be given, or a particular work be done, or the ministers be given a certain directive, and if there is some difference over that, or if the Council of Ministers disapproves of it, then I have directed that immediately, at all moments, at every place, I be informed. For, however much I may labour, and howsoever much I carry on my State duties, I do not feel satisfied. I consider it my paramount duty to do good to all. This is not possible without hard labour and devotion to State duties. There is no work greater than seeing to the welfare of all. Whatever power I have, its main object is to see that I may be free of the great debt which I owe to my people, and make them happy here and enable them to enjoy heavenly life hereafter. I have got this edict erected that this may remain permanent and my wives, sons and grandsons use their power for the well-being of all."[1]

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[1] See article entitled "Contribution of Buddhism to Civilisation," **ISCUS**, Vol. II, No. 3, Autumn, 1955; pp. 13-16. Rahul, before he left the Buddhist order and became a Marxist, was given the title of Mahapandit and Tripatikacharya, that is, the highest in learning and knowledge of Buddhist canonical literature. He has more than hundred books to his credit, including fictions, travelogues, biographies, history, essays, dramas, philosophy, and on Buddhist religion, of which he has written tomes. His opinions have, therefore, great value and authority.

The Three Features Of Feudalism

And now we will attempt a brief discussion of the question of feudalism in India. As a general type of socio-political and economic organisation, Otto Hintze has enumerated its following features:[2]

(1) *Military*—separating out of a fully developed military stand, pledged in fidelity to the ruler, resting on private contract and holding a privileged social rank;

(2) *Socio-economic*—formation of a manorial-peasant economy which affords to this privileged military order a labour-free rent income;

(3) *Local jurisdiction* (Herrenstellung) by this military nobility.

Hintze has rightly attached more importance to the economic element of feudal society than the others. Manorial-peasant economy had the same importance for this feudal society as, for example, capital-labour relations have for modern society.

It is clear that in applying Hintze's categories of feudalism to India, we will have to concentrate on 2 and 3, for the European type of homage, fealty and fidelity seems to have developed at a very late stage, in Rajputana, Bundelkhand, Baghelkhand, etc., after the central power of the Moghals had decayed. There we have the spectacle of knight-errants with their castles and armorial bearings and all the rest of it, with whom the British entered into treaties and created feudatory princely states, albeit even of 30 villages. As we have already pointed out, the developments in these parts were rapidly leading into the classic feudal form, when the British conquerors came. And even there, as any investigation and visit to these areas will reveal, the rent-exaction and the tenant-squeezing process did not have even a remote similarity with the processes of classic feudalism, and the village communities as also the village headmen were respected by the chieftains. Not that a military nobility is never to be found in Indian history. Its existence is to be traced in various phases of Indian history with considerable variations in its position.

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[1] From **Ashok Ke Dharma-Lekh** (i.e. the Religious Edicts of Ashoka) by Janardana Bhatta, with a foreword by late Acharya Narendra Deva, Gyanmandal Karyalaya, Kashi, 1923; rendered in English by the author from the Hindi translation of the original Pali; pp. 181-184.

[2] See Daniel Thorner's paper "Feudalism in India : Some Preliminary Notes," referred earlier in this chapter.

But, by and large, as revealed in Kautilya's *Artha-Shastra,* there used to be a sort of a military service tenure whereunder entire villages were given revenue-free on condition to supply soldiers for the armed forces of the State. The following remarks of Dr. Daniel Thorner would be found relevant in this context: "Much more typical for India was a sort of military service tenure put in on a prebendal or ministerial basis. Thus India by and large lacked that specific linking of vassalage and benefice which through personal *Treupflicht*, invested Frankish feudalism with its peculiar moral force."[1]

The Social-Existence Form Of Labour Power Under Feudalism

Systems of social organisation, however, are linked with modes of production, and so we shall turn our attention to this aspect. Later thinkers and writers have looked at feudalism essentially as a mode of production. In his *Studies in the Development of Capitalism,* Maurice Dobb says that it is "an obligation laid on the producer by force and independently of his own volition to fulfil certain economic demands of an overlord, whether these demands take the form of services to be performed or of dues to be paid in money or in kind....This coercive force may be that of military strength, possessed by the feudal superior or of custom backed by some kind of judicial procedure, or the force of law."[2] In other words, Dobb identifies feudalism with serfdom, which to us appears the correct thing to do. Another economist, Sweezy, denies that serfdom is any specific historical category.[3] And, commenting upon this Dobb-Sweezy controversy, Prof. Takahashi says : "When we consider the ancient, the feudal and the modern bourgeois modes of production as the chief stages in economic history, the first thing to be taken into account must always be the *social existence-form of labour power,* which is the basic, the decisive factor in the various modes of production. Now certainly the basic forms (types) of labour are slavery, serfdom and free wage labour; and it is surely *erroneous to divorce serfdom from feudalism as a general conception.*" And, further : "In feudalism, since the immediate producers appear in combination with the means of production, and hence labour power cannot take the form of a commodity, the appropriation of surplus labour by the feudal lords takes place directly, by extra-economic coercion without the mediation of the economic laws of commodit exchange."[1]

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[1] "Feudalism in India : Some Preliminary Notes," Op. cit.

[2] Quoted from **Science and Society**, Vol. XVI, No. 4. Fall 1952; p. 314.

[3] In his support Sweezy has quoted Engels to say : "It is certain that serfdom and bondage are not a peculiarly medieval-feudal form, we find them everywhere or nearly everywhere where conquerors have the land cultivated for them by the old inhabitants." (Ibid, p. 315.)

Thus, for our consideration, the social-existence form of labou power becomes important. And while serfdom is a necessary con concomitant of feudalism, which fact we have to bear in mind, w have also to see how and in what form is the surplus labour appropriated by the feudal lord. About this appropriation, R. H. Hilton (o the University of Edinburg) opines:[2] "The principal featur of the mode of production in feudal society is that the owners o the means of production, the landed proprietors, are constantl striving to *appropriate for their own use the whole of the surplu produced by the direct producers*."

Evolution Of Feudal Rent

This appropriation of the entire surplus by the Europea feudal lord could be possible in the manorial system, the system o direct exploitation in the lord's demesne of medieval Europe This was the labour rent stage of feudal landed property, involvin weekly forced labour by the serfs on the lord's fields—the mos vital element in the sustenance of European feudality. In cours of time, about the 14th and 15th centuries, as a result of th development of exchange in peasant economy, whether for purpose of local trade or for trade with distant lands through the risin class of merchants, this form of labour rent underwent a change This change again was different in different areas—in England i became money rent, in France and Germany it was converted t rent in kind—but, as Prof. Takahashi has said, "it did not produc any basic change in the nature of feudal rent."

We in India, following British occupation of our land muc later, had a different kind of experience of evolution to mone rent from rent in kind (See Chapter VI), and so we have peruse with great interest a very able essay on "Evolution of Feudal Ren in England, XI to XV Centuries," by E. Kosminsky in the Londo journal of scientific history *Past and Present* (No. 7 of April 1955) which throws vivid light on this change-over to money rent. Th growth of money rent is obervable in the 12th century, partl supplanting labour rent and rent in kind. This phenomenon is linked with :

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[1] Ibid, pp. 315, 317. It would be interesting to note the distinction drawn by Mar between feudal and capitalist production. According to Marx, under capitalis "the labourer, in the first place......is no longer an independent producer bu is divorced from his means of production and from the possibility of providin his own subsistence, but in the second place......his relationship to the own of the means of production who employs him is a purely contractual one...... the face of the law he is free to both choose his master and to change master and he is not under any obligation, other than that imposed by a contract service, to contribute work or payment to a master." (Quoted by Dobb in h **Studies**, p. 36.)

[2] **Science and Society**, Vol. XVII, No. 4, Fall 1953, p. 343

(i) Growth of division of labour;
(ii) Increase of non-agricultural population;
(iii) Development of a steady market—chiefly a town market —for agricultural produce, which was principally supplied by the peasants.

And Kosminsky remarks : "The partial replacement of labour rent by money rent was accompanied by a contraction of the lord's demesne and by the leasing of parcels of the demesne for money rent. Money rent could also develop independently of commutation of rent in kind, as a supplement to it." Kosminsky has, indeed, traced at length this process for England between the 11th and 15th centuries, through its various vicissitudes, till money rent was finally established. Among other reasons, the peasant rebellions were responsible for the collapse of feudal demesne, following which a large quantity of land was offered on the market. "All this led to the stabilisation of rents at a comparatively low level. The ending of servile dependence and of the compulsory tying of the peasant to the soil also favoured the peasants in their struggle over rents."

The picture which therefore emerges is as follows : During the entire feudal epoch in the West, the specific economic circumstances varied from period to period and country to country for a variety of reasons, and so exactions of feudal rent varied in incidence, as also in form. A contributing factor to this variation was the social and economic inequality of those from whom the rent was demanded, and their differing characteristics from period to period during the entire feudal epoch. Changes in the structure of feudal land property, such as the decline of the manorial system, brought changes in the form of rent : in England to money rent; in France and in Germany to rent in kind; and in Germany back to labour rent again in the 18th century, when Junkerism revived with militarism.[1]

Social-Existence Form Of Labour Power In India

Let us now apply these categories of feudalism to India. Let us, for example, examine the social-existence form of labour power in India. The broad basis of the mode of production in India, from times immemorial, has been the unity of agriculture with village or cottage industry, and in this the spinning and weaving industries constituted "an archaic and integral part of this unity."[1] This unity of agriculture and industry existed in the background of common ownership of land by the village community. Voluntary desire to cultivate land was the basis of husbandry, and it was never an obligation laid on the cultivator, independent of his volition. The obligation to pay *Bali,* that is (in terms of the village life) a rent in kind, was there since the ancient-most times, but it was an obligation voluntarily accepted and limited by the oldest laws laid down and fixed by custom varying between 1/6th and 1/12th of the produce, never as a result of the coercive power of a feudal superior exercised by virtue of his military strength. The question of the appropriation of the whole of the surplus produced, which, as Hilton has pointed out, used to be the constant striving of the feudal lord, does not therefore arise. If serf-labour or serfdom cannot be divorced from feudalism, then search for feudalism in India would be equally vain. Takahashi has said that[2] under feudalism "Feudal landowners' accumulations of the products of forced labour or of feudal dues in kind entered into circulation as serf-produced commodities." India can boast of a very prosperous and profitable foreign trade since ancient times, based on a developed shipping system and technique, and this trade continued right upto the decline of the Moghal Empire, so much so that in the fashionable courts of the French Bourbons, the high water-mark of culture and best dress was considered to be the use of Banaras, Murshidabad and Dacca silk.[3] The variety and richness of India's export trade is further indicated when the rising millocracy of Lancashire and Manchester, after the British Industrial Revolution, organised regular "Boycott Indian Cloth" movements in England towards the end of the 18th century, and the high tariff walls[4] they raised against the import of Indian goods in mid-nineteenth century, even when their domination over India had commenced. This considerable export trade cannot be attributed to the same sources which supplied the goods for the market in feudal Europe.

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[1] Prof. Takahashi has said : "The development of exchange in the peasant economy, whether it served the local market directly, or more distant markets through merchant middle-men, led to the development of money rent. The development of exchange in the lord's economy, on the other hand, led to the growth of labour services." (**Science and Society**, Vol. XVI, No. 4, Fall, 1952).

European Feudal Lord's Jurisdiction Vested In Village Panchayats In India

We need not go into the highly developed state of handicrafts and the weaving industry, as also a number of others, which amazed and surprised visitors to our land in the course of long centuries of our history. Production here by the primary producers, as Marx has said, was first for direct use, the surplus alone becoming a commodity. And this production was independent of the division of labour brought about by the exchange of commodities. Nor could it be otherwise. In the medieval demesne of Europe, the lord had his manorial system and, apart from drawing his sustenance from the customary labour services of the peasants within the demesne, he exercised his jurisdiction through the manorial court. In India, on the contrary, just as there was no demesne or manor, so also there was no manorial court. Actually, the jurisdiction exercised by the lord in Europe was vested in India in the Village Panchayats.[1]

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[1] Karl Marx : **Articles on India**, Op. cit., p. 80 (quoted from **Capital**, Vol. III).

[2] **Science and Society**, Vol. XVI, No. 4, Op. cit., p. 316

[3] Apart from concrete historical evidence of this trade, the great historical novels of Dumas and Hugo, among others, refer many a time to the dresses worn by the highest nobility as made of cloth and silk from India.

[4] See next Chapter.

India From The Feudal Rent Angle

We will now examine Indian society from the feudal rent angle. We have traced the evolution of rent in the West, from labour rent to money rent with the intervening and long period of rent in kind. Now in India, the stage of labour rent disappeared with the first phase of slavery, and rent in kind continued through centuries till the advent of the British. All historians are agreed that evolution to rent in kind indicates a further level of social development than labour rent. Under the latter, as in the European lord's demesne, the producers have to work under the supervision of an agent, but in the former, producers are their own supervisors. Once, however, the system of rent in kind takes root, it does not necessarily follow that the society continues to evolve or progress. Even in the absence of the usual feudal forms, continuance of the kind-rent in India for centuries is indicative of a stationary society. Marx's oft-quoted remarks in this connection would be relevant[1]: "Owing to the peculiar form of the rent in kind, by which it is bound to a definite kind of product and of production, owing furthermore to the indispensable combination of agricultural and domestic industry attached to it, also to the almost complete self-sufficiency in which the peasant family supports itself and to its independence from markets and from the movements of production and history in the social sphere outside of it, in short, owing to the character of natural economy in general, this form is quite suitable for becoming the basis of stationary conditions of society, such as we see in Asia."

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[1] Marx's description of the organisation of these villages communities would be found vivid and instructive: "The constitution of these ancient communities varies in different parts of India. In those of the simplest form the land is tilled in common and the produce divided among the members. At the same time, spinning and weaving are carried on in each family as subsidiary industries. Side by side with the masses thus occupied with one and the same work, we find the 'chief inhabitant', who is judge, police and tax-gatherer in one; the book-keeper who keeps the accounts of the tillage and registers everything relating thereto; another official who prosecutes criminals, protects strangers travelling through, and escorts them to the next village; the boundary man, who guards the boundaries against neighbouring communities; the water-overseer who distributes the water from the common tanks for irrigation; the Brahmin who conducts the religious services; the schoolmaster who on the sand teaches the children reading and writing; the calender-Brahmin or astrologer, who makes known the lucky or unlucky days for seed time and harvest, and for every other kind of agricultural work; a smith and a carpenter, who make and repair all the agricultural implements· the potter who makes all the pottery of the village; the barber; the washerman, who washes clothes; the silversmith, here and there the poet, who in some communities replaces the silversmith, in others the schoolmaster. This dozen of individuals is maintained at the expense of the whole community. If the population increases, a new community is founded, on the pattern of the old one, on unoccupied land. The whole mechanism discloses a systematic division of labour; but a division like that in manufactures is impossible, since the smith and carpenter, etc., find an unchanging market, and at the most there occur, according to the sizes of the villages, two or three of each, instead of one. The law that regulates the division of labour in the community acts with the irresistible authority of a law of Nature, at the same time that each individual artificer, the smith, the carpenter, and so on, conducts in his workshop all the operations of his handicraft in the traditional way, but independently, and without recognising any authority over him." (Capital; Op. cit., pp. 357-358.)

The Indian Peasant Was A Free Man

To this 'stationary' aspect of our village society we shall come later. What stands out is the fact that the peasant in the village was a free man, unhindered by the might or authority of superior holders. We are well aware of the differences that exist about the nature of ownership of land within the village itself. There are two distinct opinions on the subject. The view more generally accepted is that land was held in common, that there was communal ownership of land. The other view is that the king was the lord of the land and from him peasants got it for cultivation as peasant proprietors. This statement is derived from Yajnavalkya. Says Yajnavalkya :[2] "After having made a gift of land or having made a corrody, the king (literally the lord-of-the-land) should cause a document to be drawn up for the sake of information of good kings (who will come) in future. On a piece of cloth, or a copper plate marked on the top with his seal, having written (the names of) his own ancestors, as well as of himself, the lord of the earth should cause to be recorded a fixed edict containing the extent of the corrody and the description of the gift (of land with its) boundary, bearing his autograph and date."

Who Owned Land In India ?

But, as we have remarked earlier, the Sanskrit texts can be quoted to establish the contrary as well, and instances of not only common ownership but co-operative cultivation can also be cited. Dwijdas Datta, in two able studies,[1] has argued the case for the existence of individual ownership, while the late Dr. Annie Besant thought that "the village owned the land on which it worked."[2] The king did not interfere in village matters, and Dr. Besant has quoted the following reply of a king to her mistress who wanted to share his power: "My love, I have no power over the subjects of my kingdom, I am not their lord and master, I have only jurisdiction over those who revolt and do wrong."[3] Commenting upon this controversy, Shri Baldev Upadhyaya, a noted Vedic Scholar, remarks:[4] "There exists considerable differences among scholars regarding the ownership of the fields. Perusal of *Rig-Veda* indicates that fields were not owned by the community; it was a matter of individual ownership. In confirmation of this view can be cited that *Mantra,*[5] where Apala compares the field of the father with his head. This individual ownership should not, however, be regarded as each one having his separate plot, but rather each family having ownership rights over a farm. The conception that the king owned all the fields and the land does not appear to be very strong in Vedic Age."

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[1] **Articles on India**, Op. cit., p. 81 (Quoted from **Capital**, Vol. III).

[2] Quoted from **Yajnavalkya Smriti with the Commentary of Vijnaneswara called the Mitakshara and Notes from the Gloss of Balambhatta**, translated by Srisa Chandra Vidyaranva, Panini Office, Allahabad, 1918: CCC XVIII, CCC XIX and CCC XX on pp. 400-401.

We will not prolong the discussion of this controversy. The great majority of opinion, however, agrees with the ideas of Marx and Nehru that land has been traditionally held in India in common ownership. And so far as our search for the feudal ages in India is concerned, common or individual ownership is not very material, since in either case we do not come across superior holders of land commanding fealty and fidelity from the primary producers. And this search has not yielded much by way of tangible results.

The Age-Old Panchayat System And Moslem Rule

The coming of the Moslems, however, at a certain stage, tended to upset this age-old system, though the tendency did not ultimately triumph, not considering, of course, the decadent period of Moghal rule. Islam, as originally conceived, set itself firmly against appropriation of wealth from other's labours, against exploitation as such, and this may be said to have to a certain extent influenced Muslim land policies. The *Koran* specifically directs : "Oh ye who believe, spend what is sinless, out of the things you have earned, and out of the things I have brought forth for you from the earth."[1]

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[1] **Peasant-Proprietorship in India** (Comilla, 1924) and **Landlordism in India** (Bombay 1931.)

[2] Annie Besant : **India, Bond or Free : A World Problem**, Putnam's, London, 1926; p. 37.

[3] Ibid; p. 36 (Quoted from Ronaldshay's **India : A Bird's Eye View**, pp. 137-138).

[4] See article entitled "Vaidic Aryon Ka Arthik Jeevan" (i.e. Economic life of the Vedic Aryans) in **Nagari Pracharini Patrika**, Diamond Jubilee Number, Banaras. 1953; **p. 216.**

[5] इमानि त्रीणि विश्र्या तानीन्द्र विरोह्य । शिरस्ततस्योर्वरामादिदं म उपोदरे ॥
(Rig. 8|99|5)

Nevertheless, during the third and fourth centuries of Moslem rule in India, society did get the appearance of a feudal organisation with the king at the apex. The nobles, next in rank to the king, did enjoy special honours and privileges, indulged in luxury and intemperance, and led a life of "wanton and reckless festivity, superfluous pomp, inflated pride, and ornamental daintiness." These remarks were made by Francisco Pelsaert, the chief of the Dutch factory at Agra in Jehangir's time. In the closing years of Shah Jehan's reign, however, these nobles became more demoralised, the peasants were more harassed by the provincial governors, their condition became worse, and the evil of pauperism increased.[2]

It would appear that the process of local usurpation of superior powers over land commenced when the important revenue experiments of Surs were undone following the confusion and disorder that prevailed after the reigns of Sher Shah and Islam Shah. Even then, as Abul Fazl's *Ayeen Akbari* tells us, the old machinery of Government and time-honoured customs and procedures were inherited by Akbar, who, when he ascended the throne, found three kinds of land in the country—the *Khalsa* or crown lands, the *Jagir* lands, enjoyed by some nobles who collected the local revenues, out of which they sent a portion to the central exchequer and kept the rest for themselves, and the *Sayurghal* lands, granted on free tenure.

Akbar's Revenue Settlement

Akbar did not take long to realise the growing defects, and as early as 1570-1571, Muzaffar Khan Turbati and Raja Todar Mull were asked to revise the whole system of land revenue. The revised assessment was based on estimates framed by the local *Qanungoes*, and checked by the superior *Qanungoes* at headquarters. Revenue reforms under Akbar were, however, given final shape in 1582, when Todar Mull was appointed the *Diwan-i-Ashraf*. Before this, assessments were fixed annually on the basis of the produce and market prices. The chief features of the new revenue system enforced by Todar Mull were : (1) survey and measurement of land, (ii) classification of land, (iii) fixation of rates. Land measurement was standardised and lands were classified.[1] "Only the area actually cultivated was assessed, and, in order to ascertain the average produce of land belonging to each class, the mean of the three grades into which it was divided was taken into consideration."[2] Akbar fixed the State demand at one-third of the actual produce,[3] and the ryot was free to pay it in cash or kind. The cash rates varied according to crops.

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[1] *"Ya-ayuthallazina amanu anfeku min tayyibate ma kasabtum va memma akhrajna lakum minal arze,"* **(Suratul-Bakar—Ruku, 36).**

[2] **See An Advanced History of India by Majumdar, Raychaudhuri and Datta, Macmillan, London, 1946; pp. 556-567.**

While such was Akbar's revenue settlement, the revenue administration was also reorganised so as to remove all the so-called superior holders who had interposed themselves between the State and the cultivators. The Empire was divided into *Subahs,* and each *Subah* was sub-divided into *Sarkars*. Each *Sarkar* comprised a number of *Parganas,* which actually was a union of several villages. Each district had an *Amalguzar,* that is, a revenue collector, and he had a large subordinate staff to assist him. Among these were measurers and *Karkuns,* responsible for preparation of the seasonal crop statistics; the *Qanungo,* who kept a record of revenue payable by each village; the *Bitikehi,* or accountant, and the *Potdar,* or district treasurer. At the village level was the village *Muqaddam* (headman) and the village *Patwari.* And, be it noted, these men were not State employees but servants of the village, and their selection to the post, as also their continued employment, was dependent on their enjoying the goodwill of the village community.

And, as *Ayeen Akbari* tells us, these officers were constantly receiving orders to behave well with the peasants. The heads of the *Subahs* were told that they "must constantly keep in view the happiness of the people." The *Amalguzar* was told that "he must assist the needy husbandman with loans of money, and receive payment at distant and convenient periods," and "not to extend the hand of demand out of season." In the reigns of Shahjahan and Aurangzeb even, when the administration and revenue had started getting out of gear, there are instances of revenue officials and even provincial governors being dismissed on complaints being made against them by the subjects to the Emperors.[1]

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[1] **Ayeen Akbari tells us of the following four classes of land :** (i) *Polaj* or "land cultivated for every harvest being never allowed to lie fallow;" (ii) *Parauti,* or land "kept out of cultivation for a short time, in order that the soil may recover its strength," (iii) *Chachar* or "land which had lain fallow for three or four years"; and (iv) *Banjar,* or land not cultivated for five years and upwards.

[2] **An Advanced History of India,** Op. cit., p. 561.

[3] **Ayeen Akbari,** in treating 'of Tributes and Taxes,' tells us : "In former times the monarchs of Hindustan exacted the sixth of the produce of the lands; in the Turkish Empire the husbandman paid the fifth, in Turan (Persia) the sixth, and in Iran, the tenth. But at the same time there was levied a general poll-tax called *Kheraj.*" There is cited the example of Noorshervan, "under whose reign Muhammad was born, who determined that a third part (of the actual produce) should be the proportion of the revenue." Taking all this into consideration, Akbar fixed one-third part of the actual produce as the revenue due to the State, and payable either in money or in kind, at the option of the peasantry.

Moslem Rule Affected No Basic Changes In India's Village System

Thus, both from the point of view of rent realisation, as also the existence of rights above the primary producers, the Moghal system cannot be defined as feudal. Rents no doubt were raised to one-third of the produce, but this position is no where near the rate of feudal rent in the West, veering as it did to appropriation of almost the entire surplus. The coming into existence of feudal type of superior rights before Akbar's times cannot be denied, but these were few and far between, and restricted by customs and usuages. Akbar made a brave attempt to undo the wrong, and he undoubtedly achieved remarkable success. The stagnation, however, again appears to set in during Aurangzeb's reign.

In actual practice, the Muslim rulers did not basically alter the land system they found in India. The only departure, if it may be so called, was the rights given to individuals to farm revenue in limited tracts and get some commission on the job done. These revenue-farmers, in point of fact, had begun to make their appearance even in later Hindu period, but they, in turn, had to go to the village community for the realisation of the State's dues. These revenue-farmers, variously called the *iqtadars* or *iqbaldars,* and the benefice-holders constantly strove to make their position hereditary, and their success or failure in this strife was directly proportional to the strength and weakness of the central regime at Delhi. And in the period after Aurangzeb, when Moghal rule and authority declined, these revenue-farmers continued to strengthen their position. It was with them that the conquering Britishers entered into a settlement, buttressed them as their props, and through them created a feudal-capitalist regime in India. History witnessed the shocking spectacle of the leaders of Industrial Revolution, the British. allying themselves with the most backward and conservative classes in India. It may, however, be mentioned that even though the trend towards a feudal type of society had become pronounced, and had reached definite shape and form in Rajputana after the decline of the Moghals, the village system and Akbar's revenue organisation, nevertheless, remained the dominant feature of land use in India. Thus, for example, two years before his retirement, Warren Hastings, in a communication to the Court of Directors, referred to the revenue systems in *Ayeen Akbari* as "most easy and most familiar to the minds of the people."[1] And from Appendix No. 16 to John Shore's Minute of 2nd April, 1788, we learn that "the institutes of Akbar continued in use until the time of Bahadur Shah (1207-1712 A.D.),"[2] that is, till about 50 years before the East India Company's acquisition of the *Diwani* of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in 1765.

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[1] **An Advanced History of India, Op. cit., p. 562**

In the face of this overwhelming evidence, attempts to characterise the Moghal period as feudal, which characterisation, it would appear, follows from confusing a bureaucratic administration with feudal forms, cannot stand on firm ground. W. H. Moreland, an able British Officer, noted for his study *Agrarian System of Moslem India,* emphatically repudiated the characterisation of Delhi regime as feudal. Says Moreland : "We have officers posted to their charges by the King, and transferred, removed, or punished, at his pleasure, administering their charges under his orders, and subjected to the strict financial control of the Revenue Ministry. None of these features has any counterpart in the feudal system of Europe; and, as a student of European history to whom I showed the foregoing summary observed, the analogy is not with the feudal organisation, but with the bureaucracies which rulers like Henry II of England attempted to set up as an alternative to feudalism. The use of the feudal terminology was presumably inspired by the fact that some of the nobles of the Delhi kingdom occasionally behaved like feudal barons, that is to say, they rebelled, or took sides in disputed successions to the throne; but, in Asia at least, bureaucrats can rebel as well as barons, and the analogy is much too slight and superficial to justify the importation of feudal terms and all the misleading ideas which they connote. The kingdom was not a mixture of bureaucracy with feudalism: its administration was bureaucratic throughout."

Feudal Forms Absent But There Was Unrestrained Despotism

This absence of the feudal form in Indian society during Moslem rule should not, however, be interpreted to mean that all was well in India and there was happiness and prosperity all round. During Shah Jehan's time a terrible famine raged in Gujrat and Deccan, and he did next to nothing to give any relief. Instead, he gave attention to building great buildings like the Taj, the Moti Masjid of Agra, the *Diwan-i-Aam* and *Diwan-i-Khas* in Delhi's Red Fort, and the like. But "behind this fairy-like beauty were the poverty-stricken people, who paid for the palaces, though many did not have even huts to live in. There was unrestrained depotism."[1] Despite the emergence of this despotism, a feature also noticed by Marx, Nehru remarks :[2] "Nevertheless the Afghan and Moghal rulers took special care not to interfere with old customs and conventions and no fundamental changes were introduced, and the economic and social structure of Indian life continued as before. Ghayas-ud-Din Tughlak issued definite instructions to his officials to preserve customary law and to keep affairs of the State apart from religion, which was a personal matter of individual preference. But changing times and conflicts, as well as the increasing centralisation of government, slowly but progressively lessened the respect given to customary law. The village self-governing community, however, continued. This break-up began only under British rule."

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[1] Dwijadas Dutta : **Landlordism in India,** Op. cit., p. 40.

[2] See C. D. Field's **Landlordings** etc.: Op. cit.: footnote on p. 439.

Village Communities And Indian Society: An Evaluation

The absence of the classic feudal form in India is thus directly attributable to the continuation of the village community system from immemorial times, with hardly any change worth the name through the ages. From this, however, none should arrive at the conclusion that these village communities were the mainstay of India's prosperity and progress. Prosperity there may have been, and witness as we are to the horrors, depredations and famines of later British rule, the conditions of living in pre-British times appear to us heavenly indeed, but progress there was none. Instead of progress, there was stagnation. Dr. Radha Kumud Mookerji has used a typical phrase for these bodies, "the shell of the tortoise,"[3] where in times of political storms the national culture could withdraw for safety. We are not so sure. For one, national political storms are meant to be faced and not escaped from; for another, these communities, despite their good points, provided the well where the proverbial frog continued to exist with all the attendant features of the *Koop-Mandook* (i.e. the frog of the well). To-day, when a great revival of the village system is undoubtedly one of the most amazing and inspiring features of new India, we have to be well aware of this aspect of our this ancient institution, which, in fact, explains many features and aspects of our history.

Identical Ideas Of Nehru And Marx

And so, before concluding this chapter, we would like to express ourselves on this aspect. In the course of our studies we have been struck by the remarkable similarity between the views of Nehru and Marx on the question. Nehru is emphatic that feudalism is not a feature of Indian history, 'the peasant in India was not the lord's serf,' and so is Marx,[1] though recent Marxists seem to differ from him and are apparently taking pains to establish the contrary.

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[1] Nehru : Glimpses of World History, Op. cit., p. 314.

[2] Discovery of India, Op. cit., p. 290.

[3] Local Government in Ancient India, First Edition, 1919, p. 10

Again, both are agreed that despite their good points, the simplicity of the organisation and the self-sufficient character, these village communities were not conducive to progress. Says Nehru:[2] "The amount of local freedom and independence that the villages had was a good thing, and there were other good features also. But we must not lose sight of the defects of the system. To live a self-sufficient village life cut off from the rest of the world was not conducive to progress in anything..... The village communities, with all their good points, could not be centres of progress." And Marx says:[3] "The simplicity of the organisation for production in these self-sufficing village communities that constantly reproduce themselves in the same form; and when accidentally destroyed, spring up again on the spot and with the same name—this simplicity supplies the key to the secret of the unchangeableness of Asiatic societies, an unchangeableness in such striking contrast with the constant dissolution and refounding of Asiatic States, and the never-ceasing changes of dynasty. The structure of the economical elements of society remains untouched by the storm-clouds of the political sky."

Again, Nehru notes that absence of the means of communication made the village communities live their separate lives, but growth and progress consist in co-operation between larger and larger units, and that when persons or groups keep to themselves, they become self-centred, selfish, narrow-minded and superstitious.[4] Under such circumstances, the central power becoming despotic and bureaucratic is a matter of time. And Marx says:[5] "We must not forget that these idyllic village communities, inoffensive though they may appear, had always been the solid foundation of oriental despotism, that they restrained the human mind within the smallest possible compass, making it the unresisting tool of superstition, enslaving it beneath traditional rules, depriving it of all grandeur and historical energies."

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[1] Engels' views on this point would be found interesting: "The absence of property in land is indeed the key to the whole of the East. Here lies its political and religious history. But how does it come about that the Orientals do not arrive at landed property, even in its feudal form? I think it is mainly due to the climate, together with the nature of the soil, especially with the great stretches of desert which extend from the Sahara straight across Arabia, Persia, India and Tartery up to the highest Asiatic plateau. Artificial irrigation is here the first condition of agriculture and this is a matter either for the communes, the provinces or the central government. And an Oriental Government never had more than three departments: finance (plunder at home), war (plunder at home and abroad), and public works (provision for reproduction)." [Letter to Marx from Manchester, dated June 6, 1953, quoted from **Correspondence of Marx and Engels**, Op. cit., pp. 66-67].

[2] **Glimpses of World History**, Op. cit., p. 422.

[3] **Capital**, Vol. I, Op. cit., p. 358.

[4] **Glimpses of World History**, Op. cit., p. 422

[5] **Articles on India**, Op. cit., p. 24-25.

Conclusion

In later, and some other passages, Marx's vehemence against village communities becomes more pronounced, and it is apparent that in his estimation he, unlike Nehru, totally ignored the good aspects of village bodies in India,[1] from which sprang the following oft-quoted remark of a British Governor in India, Sir Charles Metcalfe: "The village communities are little republics having nearly everything they want within themselves, and almost independent of foreign relations. They seem to last where nothing else lasts. This union of the village communities, each one forming a little state in itself......is in a high degree conducive to their happiness, and to the enjoyment of a great portion of freedom and independence."

Sir Charles's all encomiums above may not be quite correctly placed; that the village bodies did not prove conducive to "freedom and independence" is apparent from the British conquest of India. The village communities in India moulded our history when they were vibrant with energy in the earlier stages. In later times, however, the essential changes were not brought about in their pattern in accordance with changed circumstances, social, political and economic, and they tended to become stationary and vegetative, giving the society an economic basis akin to feudalism, but the structure of the society and of the State raised on it were quite different from the European feudal structures. And this timeless base of Indian economic life received the mortal shock of its life when the British came, to which we shall now turn our attentions.

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[1] This may again be a matter of emphasis. Engaged all their lives as Marx and Engels were in polemical writings, they were prone to emphasise some aspects and ignore certain others. In later years, after Marx's death, Engels frankly confessed : "One point Marx and I always failed to stress enough and in regard to which we are all equally guilty. We all, that is to say, laid and were bound to lay the main emphasis at first on the derivation of political, juridical and other ideological notions, and of the actions arising through the medium of these notions, from basic economic facts. But in so doing we neglected the formal side—the way in which these notions came about—for the sake of the content." (Letter to Mehring, dated London, 14th July, 1893; quoted from **Correspondence of Marx and Engels**, Op. cit., p. 510-511).

CHAPTER VI

THE GREAT DESTRUCTION

> *"The British Government, by its ruthlessly thorough method of revenue collection, almost destroyed these ancient republics which could not stand the shock of this revenue collection."*
>
> *—MAHATMA GANDHI*
>
> **(Harijan, 28.5.'31)**

> *"The inordinate greed of the East India Company caused slow but steady disintegration of these Village Panchayats. The deliberate introduction of landlordism and the Ryotwari system as against the* Mauzawari *or village tenure system, dealt a death blow to the corporate life of the village communities. The British rulers did the greatest disservice to this country by destroying the ancient traditions of Village Panchayats and trying to replace them by their officers whose sole interest was to please the alien rulers by exploiting the people of India to the maximum."*
>
> **—REPORT OF THE CONGRESS VILLAGE PANCHAYAT COMMITTEE (1954).**

Still fresh in memory's mind the scene I view,
The shrivelled limbs, sunk eyes and lifeless hew;
Still hear the mother's shrieks and infant's moans,
Cries of despair and agonising groans;
In wild confusion dead and dying lie,
Hark to the jackal's yells and vulture's cry ;
The dogs fell howl, as midst the glare of day,
They riot unmolested on their prey :
Dire scenes of horror which no pen can trace
Nor rolling years from memory's page efface.[1]

—SIR JOHN SHORE (1770)

TOYNBEE has said : "When we Westerners call people 'natives' we implicitly take the cultural colour out of our perception of them. We see them as wild animals infesting the country in which we happen to come across them, as part of the local flora and fauna and not as men of like passions with ourselves. So long as we think of them as 'natives' we may exterminate them or, as is more likely today, domesticate them and honestly (perhaps not altogether mistakenly) believe that we are improving the breed, but we do not begin to understand them."[1]

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[1] Quoted from **Historical Introduction to the Fifth Report on East Indian Affairs, 1812, Vol. I, by Walter Kelly Firminger, Archdeacon of Calcutta (1914), Publisher R. Combrey & Co., Calcutta, 1917; p. cxcviii.**

It is difficult for us to say whether the Mau-Maus are today being 'exterminated' or 'domesticated', but we the 'natives' of India, in the period of just a brief one-and-a half century of our hoary history, just over, had not merely a taste, but an entire mouthful and more, of this Western type of impact with the 'breed'. Clive was the first empire-builder here, and "the arts of plunder might have been supposed to have reached their height under the command of Lord Clive, but when that nobleman returned to Europe, it appeared that he left an abundant crop of successors behind. All these too were inured to the practices of rapine, and encouraged to such a degree by repeated successes, that there was not a captain of a band of ragged sepoys who did not look to the deposition of a *Subah,* and the plunder of a province."[2]

After the Industrial Revolution, the British, otherwise an islandic people of poor means depending on sea-fishing and an export trade for their very existence, suddenly acquired unprecedented strength and power. They founded an Empire, over which the '*Sun never set*', and '*Brittania ruled the waves*'. British supremacy and domination over the world was well and truly laid. The 'civilising mission' worked with miraculous speed and tempo; innumerable British citizens, unemployed and swarming the streets of London, suddenly found gainful employment. Within the twinkling of an eye they fully comprehended the 'civilising mission', and packed off to the Orient, that distant land of India of fabulous wealth. Dazzled by India's prosperity, and troubled even for their daily living as they were, they threw themselves on the simple, unsophisticated Indian peasant like hungry wolves, and feasted themselves in a manner unprecedented in world history. And unending wealth flowed to Britain. The pockets of the financiers of the City of London bulged and bulged, and crumbs were thrown to the poverty-stricken British people, who thus also shared in the loot and rapine. And more dazzling the flow of wealth, more active became the 'civilizing mission' of an entire nation, till India was sucked dry and the bones of starved-to-death Indians bleached the plains of our Motherland. The sun now started not setting and Britannia started wave-ruling.

We would seek to show in the following pages that all this sun-not-setting and wave-ruling business was at the cost of the

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[1] **A Study of History : Toynbee : Abridgement of Vols. I-VI, by D. C. Sommerwell, Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1946; p. 36.**

[2] **The History of the Trial of Warren Hastings, from Edmund Burke's speech on Feb. 17, 1786 (IVth day of the Trial before the High Court of Parliament), Printed for J. Debrett, London, 1796; p. 4.**

Indian peasant, and a necessary part of this process was the destruction of his age-old Village Panchayat institution.

Burke's Indictment Of Early British Rule

Burke exclaimed : "The poor Ryots, or husbandmen, were treated in a manner that would never gain belief, if it was not attended by the records of the Company." And he detailed how under Warren Hastings the revenue officials of "the kingdoms of Bengal, Bahar and Orixa" went about the business: rents were raised; "people of quality, as well as others" were thrown into prison, and there "made to give bonds" to purchase their liberty; these bonds were of any amount that pleased the officials; these bonds were afterwards put in force. And how did the official go about this business ? In Burke's own words : "First he put their demense lands up to auction, and they were knocked down at one year's purchase, though the usual price of land in that country was ten......Next he sold the lands they held by lease; next the lands given by the then owners, or their ancestors, for the pious and humane purposes of providing for the sick and the infirm; lastly he sold even the very ground destined for the burial of the owners."

And further : "The cattle and corn of the husbandmen were sold for less than a quarter of their value, and their huts reduced to ashes ! The unfortunate owners were obliged to borrow from usurers, that they might discharge their bonds not at 20, or 30, or 40, or 50, but at 600 per cent !"

And now an insight into the fate of those who could not pay the money : "Coils were drawn tight round their fingers till flesh of the four on each hand was incorporated and become one solid mass ; the fingers were then separated again by wedges of iron and wood driven in between them. Others were tied two and two by the feet, and thrown across a wooden bar, upon which they hung, with their feet uppermost ; they were then beaten on the soles of the feet, till their toe-nails dropped off. They were afterwards beat about the head till the blood gushed out of the mouth, nose, and ears ; they were also flogged upon the naked body with bamboo canes, and prickly bushes, and, above all, with some poisonous weed, which were of a most caustic nature and burnt at every touch. Frequently a father and a son were tied naked to one another by the feet and arms, and then flogged till the skin was torn from the flesh. The devilish satisfaction was to know that every blow must hurt; for if one escaped the son, his sensibility was wounded by the knowledge he had that the blow had fallen upon his father; the same torture was felt by the father."

Burke, indeed, gave a long list. The most fiendish of these is the treatment meted out to virgins, and the mothers, which were so barbarous and unheard of, and which are so revolting to our sensibilities as a nation, that we would rather spare the torture to the reader.[1]

The Story Of An 'Arduous Task': Creation Of Landlordism

In the first flush of their 'civilising mission', and in their gross and pitiable ignorance of India's agrarian pattern and its rural and revenue history, the British Sahibs took upon themselves, voluntarily of course, a rather "arduous task." "Like all the Eastern sovereigns", the British claimed "a large share of the produce of the soil", but "unlike other Eastern sovereigns" it returned most of it to its subjects by maintaining "judicial and administrative services," and "through the public works it systematically" executed. The "arduous task" in fact was undertaken for these benign objects and solicitude of the Sahibs for the subjects. And, obviously, "some person, or class of persons, must of course be responsible to it for the due payment of this 'land revenue,' and this person or class must have the power of collecting it from the other owners and cultivators of the soil." Such person or persons being unknown and non-existent in the communal Indian villages, they had consequently to be created—an "arduous task" indeed! And so Maine, that one of the earliest apologists of British Rule over India said: "This double necessity, of determining the persons immediately responsible for its share of the profits of cultivation and of investing them with corresponding authority, has involved the British Indian Government, ever since the very infancy of its dominion, in what I believe to be the most arduous task which a government ever undertook."[2]

And so 'landowners' came to be created. Along with this, of necessity, came the notion of "ownership of land", unknown to India before the advent of the British. The occupant of the land possessed the right to hold and cultivate his land subject to the payment of a share of the produce to the State. As we have pointed out earlier, Akbar organised a complete and thorough system for the assessment of land revenue and its collection by State officials. In the period of chaos that followed the decline of the Moghal Empire, these revenue farmers not infrequently arrogated to themselves certain superior rights and extracted a larger share of the peasant's produce. As a result of the growth of this class of superior holders, over and above the actual tillers, the previous relationship between the State and the cultivators was blurred to a certain extent, but the encroachment upon the right of the cultivator was only partial. When the British first conquered the land, it was universally recognised that the rights of the tenants were co-ordinate with those of the landlord and equal to his in point of permanence, that the resident ryot simply as such was throughout the country possessed, as a rule, of a right of hereditary occupancy at the customary rates of the vicinity.

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[1] All Burke's extracts have been taken from his speech before the High Court of Parliament on the fifth day of Warren Hastings' trial, i.e., on Monday, Feb. 18, 1786 (Ibid; pp. 5-8).

[2] Henry Summer Maine: **Village communities in the East & West; Op. cit.; all the quotations in this para occur on pp. 31-32.**

Obliteration Of Traditional Rights Of Cultivators

Lord Cornwallis, however, was dead set to put into practice his brain-wave, namely, to create a class of "gentlemen-farmers" like the landlords of Britain. And so the Permanent Settlement was introduced in 1793, and the mischief was done. Later British rulers did seem to realise it. In a letter dated 15 January, 1819, the Court of Directors of the East India Company observed: "Consequences most injurious to the rights and interests of individuals have arisen from describing those with whom the Permanent Settlement was concluded as the actual proprietors of the land. The mistakes which grew out of the habit of describing the payment of 'ryots' as 'rent' instead of 'revenue' have introduced confusion into the whole system of tenure, have given a spacious colour to the pretensions of the zamindars in acting as if they were in the ordinary sense of the word proprietors of the land, and as if the ryots had no permanent interest but what they derived from them."

In fact, there is some evidence to show that even after the establishment of the Permanent Settlement, the relation of the landlord to tenant was for sometime recognised to be radically different from the ownership of land as understood in England. The rent paid by the tenant to the landlord was not considered to be different in nature from the land revenue paid by the landlord to the State. The early British Settlement Officers, however, unfamiliar as they were with the customs of the country, and utterly confused as they were about any policy towards India except that of heartless plunder, treated the person with whom the settlement was made as the full proprietor of the land in the English sense of the term. The rights of the cultivators were obscured and obliterated. There were, from time to time, pious sentiments expressed to provide security to the tenant, but these were not put into effect for a long time. And with lapse of time the early British administrators found it more and more difficult to ascertain the precise rights of the cultivators. No legislation was passed defining the nature of these rights, the mode of testing them or of recording them.

The Final Upshot Of The 'Arduous Task': Land Hunger And Competitive Rack-Renting

Thus, in the final upshot of the "arduous task", the landlords' rights and authority were enormously increased with the consequent loss of right by the actual cultivators. The landlord became the absolute owner and the cultivator a rack-rented tenant whose rent was fixed at competitive rates by private contract. Instead of protecting the cultivator, the British placed every power in the hands of the landlord and handed the tenant over to his mercy. While the landlord was protected from sudden and frequent changes in the demand made on him for revenue, he was at the same time allowed to screw every pie out of his tenants. The Government enforced its demand of land revenue rigorously on the zamindars, who in turn crushed the peasantry under the burden of taxation. He could increase his exactions as often as he pleased, no legal limits being placed on the amount of money which he could extort from his tenant. Further, he was invested with the power of summarily evicting the helpless tenants when the last pie had been got out of them and they could pay no more. The courts helped him, and there was the long arm of the State to protect him so long as he paid the State's share and remained loyal to the alien rulers. The peasants were deprived not only of their age-old proprietary rights in land but were subjected to the worst type of rack-renting. Wholesale evictions for non-payment of rents became very common and the most severe methods were adopted for the recovery of dues.

Were the two parties on equal terms, the harm may not have been so extensive. The increase in population, however, combined with the destruction of handicrafts and cottage industries, created a veritable competition for means of living. Landlords became completely independent of the old occupiers of the soil. A large army of land-hungry peasantry stood in constant waiting for the most miserable bit of land, and the landlord became possessed of the power to get rid of any tenant and select anyone to take his place, and generally rack-rent the new one to the utmost, taking an initial *nazrana* (gratification) in the bargain. Tenants were plentiful, competition was rife, land-hunger was severe, and a tenant had only to render himself obnoxious to the landlord, or his agent, to have his rent promptly raised or be summarily ejected.

Lest we may be accused of imposing our own pet notions over real history, we hasten to quote the Indian Famine Commission of

1880 on the actual state of affairs. Said the Commission: "It has always been an accepted principle in India that the occupant of the soil is entitled to remain there from generation to generation, provided he pays the portion of the produce which may be demanded of him by Government or by some superior holder or landlord, and this proportion has generally been fixed by local custom...... When the early British rulers began to look into the question, they were universally impressed with the belief that the rights of the tenants were co-ordinate with those of the landlord, and equal to his in point of permanence. 'There is a very general consent,' writes Sir William Muir (Governor of U.P.), 'that in the native state of things the resident ryot, simply as such, is throughout the continent of India possessed as a rule of a right of hereditary occupancy at the customary rates of the vicinity.' ......While the theory was that all existing rights should receive equal attention, and while the benefit likely to accrue to the cultivators was avowedly one of the principal objects of the settlement made for long periods, there grew up a generally exaggerated estimate of the proprietory rights of the landlords, and the corresponding depreciation of the tenant's position. English ideas of proprietorship were allowed to obscure the important limitations to which, in India, proprietorship was subject, and tendency arose for the landlord to become an absolute owner, and the cultivator a rack-rented tenant at competition rent."

A Tale From Village Lamkan: Rent Enhancement

We would here draw attention to another feature of the new rent system. While customary rates of rent were replaced by competition rents, payment of rent in kind was substituted by a demand for money rent. The system of rent in kind[1] had many advantages for the cultivator. It fixed for him a fair rent based on custom and not competition. It automatically secured to him remissions for calamities, howsoever minor. And it made the improvement of land a common concern of the tenant and the landlord.

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[1] Colonal Mac Andrew gave the following account of the system of kind rents found in U.P.: "*Batai* is the actual division of the garnered crop between landlord and tenant. It is a common form of rent in the province. *Kankut* is also a corn-rent, but instead of being a division of the actual crop, the outturn is estimated while the crop is on the ground by experts some short time before it is ripe, but when it has pretty well declared itself. The additions and deductions are made as in *batai*, and in similar variety; but all calculations are made on the estimated outturn, and the landlord's share alone is weighed out according to the result.... This mode of deducing the rent is better than *batai*, as it removes the temptation to much cheating.... *Darkatti* is the landlord's *Kankut*, valued at the harvest price of the threshing floor after all the adjustments have been made, and is consequently a harvest rent and is payable in money at this valuation." (**On Some Revenue Matters, Chiefly in Oudh**, Calcutta, 1876.)

This commutation of rents in kind into cash rents, coming as it did on top of the system of competitive rack-renting, left no limits to the competitive rents, just as there were none to the caprice and greed of the landlord or the land-hunger of the peasantry, as also the predatory character of alien rule. For this system to work, and for this greed to be satisfied, it was necessary that no cultivator be allowed to remain on his holding for any considerable period, and that there should be frequent settlement between the tenants and the zamindars, who could thus raise the pitch of rents higher and higher. This paradise for the landlord was possible only when the villages abounded with what came to be known as tenants-at-will. Indeed, the rapid growth of the tenants-at-will alarmed the 1880 Famine Commission, and in para 32 of Section I of Chapter III of Part II of its Report, it observed : "The tenants-at-will form a large and increasing class, the growth of which in some parts of India cannot be looked on without serious misapprehension. They are kept in a situation of absolute dependence on the landlord, which takes away the desire to improve the land, or to raise their own position, or to lay by anything from the profits of agriculture. The soil, therefore, is not unlikely under such tenants to become year by year less productive; and the tenant having neither credit nor stores to fall back upon becomes a prey to the first approach of famine."

British policy of land settlement in India later came to be criticised by some Britishers themselves. Sir Louis Mallet pointed out in 1875, with the assent of the then Secretary of State, Lord Salisbury, that the assumption of landlordship by the British created a confusion between revenue and rent, and that, following the prevailing economic doctrines of the 19th century, there had been too much tendency to consider that as great a share as possible of economic rent should be appropriated by the State, following which burdens were placed on the cultivators which they were not capable of bearing.

Consequences Of British Policy: The Burden Of Land Revenue

By checking the growth of India's productive forces, and by converting it into a market for British manufactures, and a source of raw materials, the Imperialists made India's economy hinge largely around agriculture and imports. Prosperous indigenous agriculture and flourishing India's manufactures were destroyed, upsetting the balance of Indian economy. A new equilibrium was sought to be established between a decaying Indian agriculture and rising British manufactures. This policy had two important consequences. Firstly, through the mechanism of import and export trade, the exchange of Indian raw materials with British manufactured goods became a predominant feature of Indian economy and yielded a large customs duty, about 24 per cent of the total revenue of the country, which was, however, appropriated by the Central Government. Secondly, it reduced Indian economy to an essentially agricultural economy, agriculture becoming its most important feature. Land revenue became the biggest single item in provincial budgets, a feature in sharp contradiction to the schemes of taxation in industrially advanced countries. In India, land revenue came to represent about 15 per cent of the total public receipts. "As against this, in Great Britain land tax and numeral rights duties contributed, in 1935-36, only £0.8 million to a total public revenue of £824.8 million. According to the French budget estimate for 1936, land tax on built and non-built property, and taxes on agricultural profits together accounted for 1,097 million francs, out of a total of 40,450 million francs, i.e., 2.5 per cent. The Italian budget for 1936-37 estimated the receipts from land tax at 152 million lires, which represents only .7 per cent of the total estimated public revenue for that year. In Greece, taxes on agricultural production constituted only 4 per cent of the total public receipts in 1934-35. In Hungary, in 1935-36, land tax contributed only 30 million pengos to a total revenue of 1,100.2 million pengos, or nearly 3 per cent. In Belgium, in 1936, land tax was responsible for 366 million francs, i.e., for 3.5 per cent. In Spain, in 1935, land tax brought only 11 per cent of the total revenue."[1]

British land policy can be summed up thus : Fair rent prescribed by immemorial custom, in the shape of a fixed share of the produce, was replaced by a fluctuating demand in silver, constantly forced higher and higher by the rise in prices and the increase in population. This conversion of kind rent into cash coincided with the decay of manufactures, the loss of military and quasi-military service, the drain of wealth out of India and the resulting narrowed choice of livelihoods, turning an ever-increasing population on land. There thus set in a veritable competition for holding land resulting in competition in rent and competitive rack-renting by the landlords.

The Working Of British Policy

There are certain other aspects of British policy to which we shall refer later, but the pattern indicated above may be taken to be general all over India, minor local variations apart. And despite much shedding of tears by certain well-meaning Britishers, and the constant and persistent references to the ever-depressing conditions of the tenantry in the plethora of despatches, and minutes, and reports, and all the rest of it, and the pleadings for checking the rot, nothing actually happened, and the peasant went downhill. Vivid accounts of this sorry tale is available almost for all the provinces of India, thanks to the detailed settlement reports, district gazetteers and host of other documents left by the early British Officers. Bengal was the first province to be trodden under the jack-boots of the alien rulers, and the literature available for that area has been sifted and commented upon in many valuable studies. Very few, if any, similar studies are available for other parts of India. It being not possible to do justice to such a study for different provinces of India in this brief historical review, we have attempted to study the developments in one province only, the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh of British times, now famous as Uttar Pradesh. We propose to supplement this study by reference to certain statistics and information we could gather for some other provinces.

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[1] Z. A. Ahmed : **Public Revenue and Expenditure in India**, Congress Economic & Political Studies No. 8, published by All-India Congress Committee, Allahabad 1938; p. 33.

(i) IN UTTAR PRADESH

Our choice of U.P. is to be attributed not only to our better acquaintance with the area, but also because the play of British revenue policies is to be observed there, in the districts of Oudh specially, after the First War of Indian Independence of 1857 (British supremacy being established there only after that)—a period of time when , after witnessing the tons of tears shed in the earlier decades in despatches and minutes, etc., it could presumably be expected that the alien rulers would be wiser and considerate.

Increase In Rents In Avadh Districts

We have come across two ponderous volumes entitled *The Collection of Papers relating to the Conditions of the Tenantry in Oudh,* published in 1883, at the North Western Provinces and Oudh Government Press, Allahabad. The two volumes contain a very large number of despatches from the various Deputy Commissioners in Oudh to the Provincial Government. Besides the comments of the Deputy Commissioners, these despatches comprise of valuable information on the conditions of the tenantry contained in reports from various officers (British) of the district, based upon their laborious and elaborate enquiries. On page 152 of the *Conditions of the Tenantry in Oudh* is found a report by Mr. H. B. Harrington, Deputy Commissioner, Sultanpur, on the increase in rents in his district. We reproduce below in full the table which the Deputy Commissioner submitted :

TABLE 1

Name of Village	Area	Rent at settlement	Rent now	Increase	Percentage increase	Average rent rate at settlement			Average rent rate now.		
		Rs.	Rs.	Rs.		Rs.	As.	p.	Rs.	As.	p.
Gorakhpur	261	578	1,167	589	101	2	3	5	4	7	6
Baramadpur	490	1,014	1,697	683	67	2	1	1	3	7	4
Dhammaur	151	591	956	365	61	3	14	7	6	5	3
Bilwai	391	1,247	1,864	617	49	3	3	0	4	12	3
Durgapur	208	796	1,175	379	47	3	13	2	5	10	4
Kallianpur	255	886	1,247	361	40	3	7	7	4	14	2
Malhupur	366	787	1,097	310	39	2	2	4	3	0	0
Muradabad	329	819	1,100	281	34	2	7	9	3	5	5
Bahlolpur	230	486	653	167	34	2	1	9	2	13	5
Sarwanpur	158	748	921	173	23	4	11	8	5	13	3
Chitaula	188	550	663	113	20	2	14	9	3	8	5

A Tale From Village Lamkan: Rent Enhancement By 406 Per Cent!

The Settlement referred to was made in and about the year 1866. By 1883, that is within 20 years, the rent in village Gorakhpur increased by 101 per cent, in Baramadpur by 67 per cent, and in Dhammaur by 61 per cent. Another very striking instance of increase in rent is provided in a report from Mr. Quinn, Hardoi Deputy Commissioner, about village Lamkan. Says Mr. Quinn :

"The zamindari village of Lamkan is a striking instance of the extent to which the services of notices of ejectment can be used to force up rents. The Government demand in this village was Rs. 3,300, but was reduced in 1281 *Fasli* to Rs. 2,810. The high *bigha* rate of Rs. 3-6-2 to Rs. 3-7-3 prevailed at Settlement. To quote the words of the Extra Assistant Commissioner who examined the village: '*Nikasi Kham* at Settlement (1273 *Fasli*) was Rs. 2,847, and from 1274 F to 1284 F it remained between Rs. 5,146 and Rs. 5,650, and from 1285 F to 1288 F it was between Rs. 7,435 and Rs. 11,393; in 1289 F it rose to Rs. 14,394. Six hundred and thirteen notices of ejectment were issued and transfers of possession took place so that no body may become an old tenant.' The enhancement has been by allowing the cultivators to bid for the land. 'There were 159 tenants at the Settlement, and now there are 202.' 'I found 51 tenants present, and asked each of them as regards his debt, etc.' 'The amount of debt is Rs. 10,070, which seems correct.' Thus, inspite of a reduction which left them much more than their recognised share of the *nikasi,* the zamindars managed in about 17 years to run up the *nikasi* from Rs. 2,847 to Rs. 14,394. Possession was constantly disturbed to enable landlords to force the cultivators to bid against one another."[1]

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[1] Conditions of the Tenantry in Oudh, Vol. II, pp. 257-258.

The enhancement of rent thus comes to the colossal figure of 406 per cent ! Part of this may be due to the cultivation of new areas, but then the figures do tell a tale. That the increase in rent was uniform all over Avadh is borne out by the table[1] below given by Mr. G. E. Erskine, Commissioner of Oudh on Special Duty. The average rise in rent incidence is during a period of 18 years, from 1865 to 1883 :

TABLE 2

District	Average rise in rent incidence
Lucknow	27.1
Unao	23.3
Barabanki	19.2
Sitapur	37.3
Hardoi	29.7
Kheri	29.2
Fyzabad	21.3
Bahraich	41.2
Gonda	13.9
Rae Bareli	25.5
Sultanpur	26.8
Partapgarh	49.4
Average for Oudh	24.5

Mr. H. W. Gibson, Deputy Commissioner, Kheri, in para 3 of his despatch No. 746, dated April 19, 1883, said : "Rents are regulated by competition, by the pressure of population on a limited area. Under the so-called freedom of contract, rack-renting is a question of supply and demand; as the supply is a fixed limited quantity incapable of expansion and the demand is ever-increasing and is illimitable, rack-renting is a matter of time."

The cumulative effect of these developments was to create conditions of great insecurity of tenure. Mr. J. B. Lyall, a Financial Commissioner of the Punjab, was deputed to study the reports of the Oudh Deputy Commissioners and suggest legislation for reform. In para 8 of his Memorandum, dated May 7, 1883, Lyall observed[2] : "The reports show clearly that in many estates...rents have been largely and rapidly increased. A system of competitive rack-renting has, in fact, been introduced."

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[1] Ibid, p. 275.

[2] Ibid, p. 242.

The Growing Pressure On Land

Conditions of the Tenantry in Oudh furnishes equally valuable information on the question of the growing pressure on land following the narrowed choice of livelihoods because of the British policy of deliberate destruction of our handicrafts, which pressure in fact resulted in competition rents. Major Forbes, who carried on the first detailed Settlement of Partapgarh in and about the year 1866, took 25 villages from each of the four tehsils of the district for detailed examination of the conditions. He found[1] that "whereas under the Kings of Oudh, the total number of cultivators in these 100 villages was 3,653, they are now 8,536. The average holding of each tenant had decreased from 6 *bighas* 13 *biswas* 13 *dhurs* to 4 *bighas* 19 *biswas* 10 *dhurs*." The following table[2] shows the density of population per square mile of cultivation of the several Parganas of district Partapgarh as also of those Parganas of districts Allahabad and Jaunpur which bordered on Partapgarh. The table compares the Census returns of 1869 and 1881 :

TABLE 3

	CENSUS 1869			CENSUS 1881		
Name of Pargana	Cultivated area in square miles	Population	Number of persons to a square mile of cultivation	Cultivated area in square miles	Population	Number of persons to a square mile of cultivation
Partapgarh	192	2,17,285	1,131.69	212	2,35,533	1,111.00
Atteha	41	44,643	1,083.65	43	45,152	1,050,04
Patti	216	2,24,624	1,039.92	228	2,65,697	1,121.47
Bihar	108	1,18,256	1,094.96	116	1,28,344	1,106.41
Dhingwas	44	47,294	1,074.84	46	52,885	1,149.67
Manikpur	16	51,858	3,241.12	40	55,474	1,386.85
Rampur[3]	79	80,196	1,015.13	59	73,962	1,253.59
	616	7,84,156	1,126.66	744	8,47,047	1,138.50
ALLAHABAD						
Soraon	75	93,466	1,246.21	...	...	1,140.49
Nawabganj	61	68,666	1,125.66	...	...	1,184.81
Mirzapur	9	19,360	2,150.00	...	...	1,743.45
JAUNPUR						
Ghiswa	62	65,938	1,063.51	Machlishahar	...	1,176.00
Gurwara	84	65,604	1,019.09			
Mungra	41	45,402	1,107.36	Khutahan	...	1,245.00
Unghi	145	1,58,334	1,091.26			
Chanda	21	20,353	969.19			

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[1] Conditions of the Tenantry in Oudh, Vol.I, p. 277.

[2] Ibid. p. 278.

[3] A portion of Rampur State was excluded at 1869 Census.

The figures show the decisive increase in the number of persons to a square mile and leave no doubt about the growing pressure on land.[1] The following table constructed by us on the basis of figures supplied by Major Erskine will give the pressure of population in the districts of Avadh on a square mile of the total area as also the numbers to each square mile of the cultivated area (as per 1881 Census):

TABLE 4

District	Pressure of population on a square mile of the total area	Numbers to each square mile of cultivated area
Lucknow	704.1	1,290
Unao	514.7	988
Barabanki	580.6	1,033
Sitapur	425.6	650
Hardoi	427.7	684
Kheri	278.0	716
Fyzabad	640.2	1,140
Bahraich	320.3	700
Gonda	442.0	713
Rae Bareli	547.6	1,028
Sultanpur	561.1	1,190
Partapgarh	589.6	1,126
For Avadh	469.7	867

The figures speak for themselves. Exceedingly great pressure of population on land thus became the main feature of the agriculture of Avadh, as indeed of India as a whole. The 1881 Census Report estimated that 58 per cent of the population depended on agriculture in India as a whole. The following table shows the continuous increase in India in each Census after 1881, till 1931 :[1]

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[1] The Census in 1881 for Jaunpur was taken tehsilwise. Persons to a square mile in Pargana Mirzapur of Allahabad district and Parganas Partapgarh and Atteha of Partapgarh district are lower in 1881 than in 1869. Figures of Pargana Manikpur of district Partapgarh are not comparable for reasons specified in the Report. Everywhere else there is increase.

TABLE 5

Census Year	Percentage of population dependent on agriculture
1891	61.1%
1901	65.5%
1911	72.2%
1921	73.0%
1931	75.0%

Rightly did the Report of the Indian Famine Commission, 1880, observe : "The numbers who have no other employment than agriculture are greatly in excess of what is really required for the horough cultivation of the land."

Rent Enhancement In The Western Districts Of U. P.

The same story of rent enhancement and growing burdens on the tenantry is true for what may be called the Agra districts of the former British province of United Provinces. The voluminous *Gazetters* left behind by the early British Officers reveal the tale most vividly. Thus, for example, the following table[2] shows the demands and collections in district Etawah from 1801-02 to 1913-14 :

TABLE 6

Year	Demand (in Rs.)	Collection (in Rs.)
1801-02	18,68,324	18.53,585
1802-03	28,99,953	27,95,476
1803-04	28,79,192	21,68,481
1804-05	28,82,098	26,05,904
1805-06	25,62,219	25,55,120
1806-07	25,91,198	25,82,302
1807-08	25,50,443	25,28,067
1808-09	28,63,511	27,84,076
1809-10	29,91,635	29,49,098
1810-11	30,09,875	29.51,402
1811-12	30,04,692	28,48,834
1812-13	25,39,540	28,65,496
1813-14	30,62,068	29,96,834

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[1] It is noteworthy that during the same period the percentage of population engaged in agriculture steadily declined in many European countries because they followed a policy of steady industrialisation. The percentage of agricultural population fell in France from 67.6 in 1876 to 53.6 in 1921. The corresponding fall in Germany was from 61 in 1875 to 37.8 in 1919. From 71 in 1880 the figure came down to 57 in 1921 in Denmark. In England and Wales it fell from 38.2 to 20.7 between 1871 and 1921. Indeed, it would appear rather incredible to the present generation in India that in and about the year 1831, when, be it noted, deterioration in our economy had already set in, in the wake of the establishment of the predatory British rule, our country was industrially much more advanced than France, Germany or Denmark, where 67.6, 61 & 71 per cent of the population, respectively, depended on agriculture, as against 58 in India.

[2] Gazetter N.W.P., being Statistical Descriptive and Historical account of the North-West Provinces of India, Vol. IV—Agra Division, Part I; prepared under orders of the Govt. of India by Edwin T. Atkinson B.A., B.C.S., N.W. Provinces Govt. Press, 1876; p. 314.

The increase in the demand in the course of a little more than a decade comes to 166 per cent! This same publication says the following of another district of Agra Division, district Eta :[1] "It is generally admitted that upto the commencement of the recent revision of settlements, rents had not been enhanced from 1838 more than 20 per cent. Since the assessments of the present Settlement have been given out (1870 to 1873), a general enhancement has taken place both through the courts and by private arrangements." And canal revenue during the brief period of 1866-67 and 1872-73 (in spite of the fact that pre-British irrigation systems were being allowed to go into disuse) increased by almost 150 per cent! See the following table[2] showing receipts and charges on account of canals during the period :

TABLE 7

Year	Collection	PAYMENTS				Percentage of payments to collections
	Rs.	Patwari's fees Rs.	Establishments Rs.	Contingencies Rs.	Total Rs.	
1866-67	29,590	457	..	..	457	1.54
1867-68	38,666	464	358	..	822	2.125
1868-69	51,527	415	618	..	1,033	2.004
1869-70	64,343	751	563	..	1,314	2.42
1870-71	54,532	2,236	..	..	2,236	4.10
1871-72	56,985	2,068	..	..	2,068	3.63
1872-73	45,366	2,098	..	..	2,098	4.62

(ii) IN ASSAM

In the brief space at our disposal we will now cite instances of this tale of woe for some other provinces. Let us, for example, take the case of Assam.[3] The official scribe proclaims with great gusto: "The total receipts from land revenue have largely increased since the creation of the Chief Commissionership." In that year (1874-75), it stood at Rs. 33,35,030 only. In 1927-28, it stood at Rs. 1,13,10,387. By 1944-45, it had increased by over Rs. 50,00,000, to Rs. 1,64,60,668. The following table constructed by us from the tables in an Assam Government publication shows the contribution of each district towards land revenue in 1874-75 and 1944-45 :[1]

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[1] Ibid, p. 83.

[2] Ibid, p. 96.

[3] By a proclamation of Feb. 6, 1874, issued under the Government of India Act, 1854, the following districts were formed into the Chief Commissionership of Assam; Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur, Cachar, the Garo Hills, the Khasi and Jaintia Hills and the Naga Hills. By subsequent proclamations Sylhet (proclamation of September 12, 1874), the North Lushai Hills (proclamation of September 6, 1895) and the South Lushai Hills (proclamation of April 1, 1898) were successively added to the Province.

TABLE 8

District	TOTAL LAND REVENUE in 1874-75	TOTAL LAND REVENUE in 1944-45
1. *Surma Valley.*	Rs.	Rs.
Sylhet ..	4,85,966	18,13,036
Cachar ..	2,37,919	9,73,909
Total Surma Valley ..	7,23,855	27,86,945
2 *Brahmaputra Valley.*		
Goalpara ..	1,25,791	6,38,778
Kamrup ..	8,17,175	28,17,670
Darrang ..	3,73,262	18,96,311
Nowgong ..	3,80,942	20,01,274
Sibsagar ..	6,01,445	27,90,288
Lakhimpur ..	2,15,067	31,38,200
Total Brahmaputra Valley	25,13,682	1,32,82,521
3. *Hill Districts.*		
Garo Hills ..	10,180	1,92,287
Khasi Hills ..	80,129	95,237
Naga Hills ..	7,154	58,229
Lushai Hills ..	....	45,449
Total Hill Districts ..	97,463	3,91,202
Grand Total for Assam ..	33,35,030	1,64,60,668

The increase from 1874-75 is about 500 per cent !!

(iii) IN ORISSA

Now a glimpse of Orissa. The first measurement and settlement of the Province were taken up at the time of Anang Bhimdeo in 12th century A.D. There were no intermediaries between the State and ryots except in certain border areas where some people were entrusted as chieftains to guard the borders for which they realised a tax called *Chaupan*. During Hindu regime, gross produce taken as revenue varied from 1|12th to 1|16th, and in times of war and distress it rose to 1/4th. In 16th century A.D., under Akbar's rule, Todarmull began the land revenue settlement of Orissa which took nine years and was finished by Raja Man Singh. Under this settlement, 1/3rd of the gross produce was taken as the share of the State, and was commuted at ten years' average price. The Moghal rulers did not bring about much change in the Hindu system of land revenue administration except merely changing the designations of the officers charged with collecting revenue and the designation of the areas. From 1751 A.D., Orissa became a Marhatta province under the management of a Subedar. They imposed many levies and taxes, but their land revenue realisations, on account of a variety of reasons, never exceeded 11 lakhs, and under the Moghals it was 15 lakhs. In the period of confusion following the decay of the Marhatta power, in 1803, the East India Company took over Orissa.

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[1] These figures have been taken from The Assam Land Revenue Manual, Vol. I, VIth edition, Shillong Government Press, 1947; See pp. xxi-xxii of Introduction.

The 15 years of East Indian rule over Orissa, from 1803 to 1818, have been called the darkest period of the Province's land revenue history. The ignorant and rapacious East Indian Officers, coached in the system of landlord creation earlier practised in Bengal under the Permanent Settlement, searched out for people willing to come forward to engage for exorbitant revenue, regardless of their rights to enter into an agreement, or the rights of the ryots and others. The first settlement in 1804, made for one year, raised the revenue demand by one lakh over that realised by the Marhattas. In order to get the maximum possible revenue from the zamindars so created, hopes of permanent settlement were held out every now and then. Between 1804 and 1815 the revenue demand was raised by 30 per cent, and was most rigorously realised, irrespective of a series of natural calamities—extensive failure of crops in 1805 due to drought, in 1807 due to floods, and in 1809 due to drought again. The Marhattas always gave liberal remissions on such occasions. On failure to pay, the estates were auctioned at Calcutta in the most indiscriminate manner. By 1818, 1,129 estates bearing more than 3|4th of the total revenue were auctioned at Calcutta, and many of the estates were sold twice, thrice and even seven times. Toynbee[1] has described how these new owners treated the ryots and the tenure-holders under them without any sympathy and consideration and ejected them from lands and property without any ceremony.[2] "The zamindars themselves had the reputation......of being habitual receivers of stolen property, if indeed they did not take a still more active part in crimes against property." These zamindars imposed a number of taxes and *abwabs* on their own, and the *Darogas* of the new Police Stations, and *Munsifs* and *Amlas* and other officers of the new dispensation let loose a veritable reign of terror and loot over the Province.[1] Groaning under these burdens the country broke out in open rebellion in 1817. It was mercilessly crushed. In 1835-45, a regular survey and settlement was taken up under which the Government demand was further raised. In the three districts of Cuttack, Puri and Balasore, for example, it was raised by about 52 per cent. This settlement of 1835-45 was to expire in 1867, but the new settlement was not taken up in that year, because of the great famine of 1866, which carried off 1/3rd of the population.[2]

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[1] See Toynbee's History of Orissa.

[2] It was at this time that *cowri*, the time-old currency of Orissa, was demonetised and was not accepted in revenue, payment being insisted in silver. As a result *cowri* depreciated very much in relation to silver and in 1811-12 it stood at 6 *kahans* and 4 *panas* to a rupee, whereas the official rate was 4 *kahans* and 2 *gandas* a rupee. And so the real burden was more than 150 per cent of its face value, though even its face value had risen by more than 30 per cent during this period of 15 years ! !

(iv) IN THE PUNJAB

Now a look at Punjab. The territories which constituted Punjab in pre-Independence India were, with a few exceptions, absorbed in the British Empire between 1803 and 1849.[3] The earliest settlement in some of the areas included in that Punjab took place in the beginning of the 19th century. One John Thornton, secretary to one Mr. Thomason, a settlement officer, thus described the operation in Vol. XII of the *Calcutta Review:* "The early settlements......were effected in a very easy and cursory way. The Collector sat in his office at the *Sadr* Station, attended by his right-hand men, the *Kanungos,* by whom he was almost entirely guided......As the *dicta* of these officers were generally followed with little further enquiry, it may be imagined that great injustice was thus perpetrated."[4] In order to understand the havoc which followed, it is essential to bear in mind that these were the classic *Bhaichara* villages[1] where the communal concept of landownership had survived almost in its pristine form. The village inhabitants were traditional coparceners and none of them was keen to come forward to undertake the responsibility of cash payments. Thus only a few of the leading landholders were accepted as *sadr malguzars,* and howsoever small their actual share in the coparcenary body, they were called zamindars and allowed to make what arrangements they could for collecting from their coparceners, who were styled 'under-tenants', though their rights were in no way inferior to the *sadr malguzar.* And so, as Douie has said : "The rights of large bodies of peasant owners were thus over-borne and were in imminent danger of destruction." An idea of the traditional system would be had from the following passage occurring Cust's Revenue Manual, page 5 : "In the early settlement of 1846 an old Sikh bluntly remarked to the Government official that the land tax belonged to Government, but the land to the people."[2]

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[1] Says Toynbee : "Their (the '*Darogas*') Thanas, which were supposed to be built out of their personal and contigent allowances, were really built by a system of forced labour and requisition of materials. Every criminal case reported to the *Darogas* was a source of income, and when they went abroad they lived on the fat of the land, took raiyats from their fields to carry their baggage and compelled the raiyats to furnish *rasad* (supplies) for which they never thought of paying. The troops did the same on their march and the *Amlas* and other underlings generally followed the general rule. Along the most frequent roots, whole villages were sometimes deserted from this cause." **(History of Orissa).**

[2] In writing the paras on Orissa we have based ourselves on (i) Articles on Revenue History of Orissa in **Orissa Review** (Vol. VI), published by the Directorate of Publicity, Govt. of Orissa, and (ii) **Final Report on the Revision Settlement of Orissa (1922-1932 A.D.)**, by W. W. Dalziel, I.C.S., Bihar & Orissa Govt. Printing Press, Patna, 1934.

[3] Gradually, by the escheat of life *jagirs* and confiscation of other grants for 'disloyalty', most of the territory came under direct rule of British power, the last and most important cases of confiscation being after the 1857 War of Independence.

[4] Quoted from **Punjab Settlement Manual** by Sir James M. Douie, K.C.S.I., I.C.S., IVth Edition, Punjab Govt. Printing Press, Lahore, 1930; p. 9.

In course of time, the British began to call the Punjab as the sword arm of India, and here, as in other areas where they had intensive army recruitment, they followed a policy of support towards the aforesaid *sadr malguzars,* who thus later developed into the typical Punjab peasant-proprietor. The coparcenary system was reduced to a mere skeleton of its original self, tenants-at-will came to constitute the vast majority of rural population, and the process was also accompanied by intensive exploitation of the agricultural labour classes. In the net result, the Revenue Demand was raised higher and higher, the burden falling, for the greater part, on the tenants-at-will, and, of course, the labouring classes. The following table[3] gives the increase in demand in village Bhensru Kalan (unirrigated) in Rohtak district, between 1838 and 1925 :

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[1] Sir Richard Temple, reporting in 1851 on the first regular settlement of Jullundur, gave the following account of the popular ideas which he found to exist as to property in land : "In five *bhaichara* estates....the regular machinery of dividing the common profits and stock, the community of interest and responsibility, the links which unite the several parts together have been just as discernible as in the *bhaichara* estates of Hindustan (i.e. modern Western U.P.—*author*). The shares were ancestral. Circumstances might have changed the relative proportion of the actual shares....But the ancient partnership was preserved in the remembrance of the brotherhood.....Stress of season and of taxation would often drive shareholders from their homesteads. The patrimony thus deserted fell into the hands of the nearest of kin. But it was held merely in trust, and must be restored intact to the refugee whenever he might return....Amidst all the alterations of cultivation and dispossession, the shares in the lands and in the common liabilities remained unchanged." (Ibid, pp. 55-56).

[2] Ibid, footnote two on page one.

[3] The Board of Economic Inquiry, Punjab, Punjab Village Surveys-2, Lahore, 1932, p. 87.

TABLE 9

Year	Cultivated area (in acres)	Revenue demand Rs.	Incidence per acre Rs. As. P.	Total Revenue and cesses Rs.	Incidence per acre Rs. As. P.
1838	924	788	0 13 9	....	....
1845	1,028	982	0 15 3	1,041	1 0 2
1879	1,028	1,001	0 15 7	1,197	1 2 8
1909	1,032	1,150	1 1 10	1,303	1 4 2
1925	1,034	1,150	1 1 10	1,332	1 4 7

The increase is apparently not as marked as elsewhere because rack-renting in the ryotwari areas of Punjab never reached the proportions in the zamindari areas. But the fact of the burdens being raised very much higher is undeniable.

(v) IN CENTRAL PROVINCES

Let us now cast a glance at Central Provinces, the present Madhya Pradesh. The province was formed in 1862 of districts widely different in history and agricultural conditions. In the area thus constituted as a Province, "the great bulk of the rental" had "a customary character". Further, in these areas, "tradition protected the ryot from enhancement so long as State did not increase the revenue demand".[1] The early settlements were carried under the famous Saharanpur Rules, which along with another document, *Directions to Settlement Officers,* provided for the fixation of the State demand in utter disregard of the customary rates. Paragraph 52 of the *Directions* said : "It is desirable that the Government should not demand more than two-thirds of what may be expected to be the net produce of the proprietor....leaving to the proprietor one-third as his profits, and to cover expenses of cultivation." Without going into details, it may be mentioned that here also, as in the United Provinces, the "arduous task" of landlord-creation was undertaken, a class of intermediaries called the *malguzars* were created and competition rents became the dominant feature of the countryside. The

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[1] **Land Revenue Policy of the Indian Government,** Calcutta, 1920, (being the Resolution issued by the Governor-General in Council on 16th January, 1902); p. 89

Government continuously raised the revenue demand from the *malguzars*, who in turn squeezed the tenants. The following table[1] gives the picture for some districts :

TABLE 10

Name of District		Revenue at Settlement Rs.	Revenue after Revision Rs.	Percentage of Revenue on assets		Percentage by which rents adjusted	Percentage by which revenue enhanced
				At Assessment	After adjustment of rates		
Mandla	Gross	42,819	61,841	65	56	+23	+48
	Net	41,684	60,001				
Seoni	Gross	Old Seoni	2,23,921			Large	
	Net	1,32,449	2,07,679	65	48	(figures N.A.)	+56
Hoshangabad	Gross	..	4,45,458				
	Net	3,09,904	4,23,851	61	46	+32	+43
Betul	Gross	..	1,84,514				
	Net	1,38,153	1,83,764	67	64	+5	+32
Raipur	Gross	..	..			Large	
	Net	3,17,819	5,31,469	..	53	(figures N.A.)	+64
Bilaspur	Gross	..	2,51,934	..	57	—do—	+61
	Net	1,51,170	2,43,734				

The figures tell their own story. It may be mentioned that towards the end of the last century, in the years following the revision, an unprecedented famine struck Madhya Pradesh killing people by the million. But more about these famines later.

Growing Burdens In Bengal, Madras, Bombay

This tale of revenue and rent enhancement is, indeed, endless and we would rather conclude it with the following table[2] showing increase in land revenue in Bengal, Madras and Bombay between 1792-93 and 1830-31 :

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[1] Ibid ; constructed from table on pp. 150-151; the first settlement was completed between 1863-68 and the revision took place between 1888-1896.

[2] Romesh Dutt : **The Economic History of India under British Rule**, Vth Edition, constructed from table on pp. 399-405. Sudden leaps in figures of land revenue in certain years may be indicative of administrative additions, but the fact of increase is very very clear.

TABLE 11

Year	Land Revenue In (in £)		
	Bengal	Madras	Bombay
1792-93	3,091,616	742,760	79,025
1794-95	3,235,259	891,640	70,238
1799-1800	3,213,230	883,859	31,364
1802-1803	3,295,761	933,108	68,015
1805-6	3,311,673	1,097,416	471,344
1808-9	3,851,128	1,057,628	427,033
1811-12	3,296,905	1,048,844	433,785
1813-14	3,310,617	892,793	400,802
1814-15	7,370,741	3,889,555	488,988
1816-17	7,875,647	3,826,107	498,102
1818-19	8,548,138	3,799,410	1,143,041
1821-22	8,258,903	3,708,404	1,761,910
1825-26	8,133,625	3,978,682	1,627,237
1826-27	8,355,800	3,669,312	1,873,427
1827-28	8,331,604	3,605,226	1,817,873
1828-29	8,200,779	3,649,012	1,722,335
1829-30	8,197,563	3,522,100	1,585,432
1830-31	8,228,161	3,460,329	1,650,061

The Insatiable Greed For Revenue: The 1770 Famine

The greed for revenue was thus insatiable. Fleeced and looted, the Indian peasant went to the wall. He died in his millions even in the very early years of the British dispensation. The awful famine of 1770 is thus described by the *Imperial Gazetter :* "The Hooghly everyday rolled down thousands of corpses close to the porticoes and gardens of the English conquerors. The very streets of Calcutta were blocked up by the dying and the dead.... (It was) officially reported to have swept away two-thirds of the inhabitants."[1] In the 18th century, Phillimore said of India that "the droppings of her soil fed distant regions." Foreign travellers and visitors to our land, from Megasthenes onwards, had spoken of the "abundant means of existence" of the cultivators. Those peasants were now a miserable lot, starving and dying. Dr. Besant saw the famines of 1896 and 1899 and wrote of "the nightmare railway stations, into which living skeletons forced their way, holding out skinny hands and crying out in agony to the passengers for food."[2]

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[1] Quoted by Annie Besant : India : Bond or Free; Op. cit., p. 72-73.

[2] Ibid, p. 73.

A List Of Famines, 1769-70 To 1898

A Government report of the time remarked : "Famine is only the pronounced expression of continuous scarcity." This "pronounced expression" almost became chronic under British rule. In the 130 years between 1770-1900, there were 22 serious famines, as well as recurring minor ones, and continued starvation remained an unbroken feature of our countryside. We give below a list of these famines, which by no means is exhaustive :

1769-70	..	The Great Bengal Famine.
1783	..	Madras and Bombay; mortality not recorded.
1784	..	Upper India; mortality not recorded.
1792	..	Bombay, Madras, Deccan and South India generally.
1802-3	..	Bombay, excessive mortality.
1803-4	..	U.P. and Rajputana.
1805-7	..	Madras, excessive mortality.
1811-14	..	Madras, not serious; Bombay, severe but no estimates of mortality.
1812-13	..	Rajputana; exceedingly severe; mortality probably 1½ to 2 millions.
1823	..	Madras; deaths were of frequent occurrence.
1824-25	..	U.P. and Bombay; great scarcity not amounting to famine.
1833-34	..	North Madras; excessive mortality, in some districts nearly 50 per cent of the population perished.
1833-34	..	Bombay; scarcity but no famine.
1837-38	..	Upper India, mortality nearly 1 million.
1854	..	Madras.
1860-61	..	U.P. & Punjab; mortality not less than 50,000.
1865-66	..	Orissa; mortality in 6 districts alone amounted to 13,00,000.
1884-85	..	Bengal, Bihar, Chota Nagpur, Bellary and Anantpur districts of Madras.
1886-87	..	Central Provinces.
1888-89	..	Bihar.
1889	..	Tributary States of Orissa.
1888-89	..	Ganjam in Madras province; much suffering. The vital statistics for these years and 1890 show an additional mortality of 1½ million.
1890	..	Kumaon and Garhwal.
1892	..	Almora and Garhwal.
1891-92	..	Madras and Bombay; Deccan and Bengal; Ajmer and Marwar; figures of All India mortality

	for 1891 and 1892 are 16,20,000 above normal.
1895-97 ..	U.P., Bengal, C.P., Madras, Punjab; mortality above normal in 1895 was 12,00,000, in 1896 it was 18,00,000, and 1897 it rose to 26,50,000; thus total mortality about 56,50,000.
1898 ..	A so-called non-famine year shows an excess mortality of 6,50,000.

A Heart-Rending Tale

It is a heart-rending and woeful tale. The story reveals that he British, in the process of their domination over India, kept no limits to brutality and savagery which man is capable of practising. Hitler's depredations, his Dachaus and Belsens, much as they have been viewed with abhorrence by the world, pale into insignificance before this imperialist savagery, as also those of others in history of that ignoble coterie of unlamented memory—the Attillas, Chengiz Khans and Nadir Shahs. William Howitt has said :[1] "The barbarities and desperate outrages of the so-called Christian race, throughout every region of the world, and upon every people they have been able to subdue, are not to be parallelled by those of any other race, however fierce, however untaught, and however reckless of mercy and of shame in any age of the earth."

The land revenue history of India under the British is replete with instances of this heartlessness; and be it borne in mind—these have been noted by British Officers and rulers themselves, there arising thus no question of these horrid stories being over-drawn or being figments of imagination. William Digby, Major B. D. Basu, and Pandit Sunderlal, in their monumental studies[2], have given most lurid details of these depredations. Many other writers, Indian and British, have dealt with the subject enhaustively and we would not go into them. By way of a sample, we will give just one instance.

The dreadful famine of 1770 wiped out at least 11 per cent population of Bengal, but the net collection of revenue in 1771 was ven more than in 1768. The Resident of the Court of Bengal said: That the diminution of revenue should have kept an equal pace ith the other consequences of so great a calamity, that is the amine, and that it did not was owing to its being violently kept p to its former standard with the help of such taxes as the

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[1] W. Howitt : **Colonisation and Christianity : A Popular History of the Treatment of the Natives by the Europeans in all Countries**, London, 1883, p. 9.

[2] These studies respectively are (i) **Prosperous British India**, (ii) **Rise of the Christian Power in India**, and (iii) **Bharat Men Angrezi Raj** (in Hindi, meaning British rule in India).

Najaij".[1] *Najaij* was a tax levied on a tenant if his neighbour ran away without paying rent or revenue. But *Najaij* was not the only one of the illegal exactions—the *abwabs,* over and above the rent realisations. A Committee of Secrecy of 1773, which went into the illegal incomes of Company's Officers,[2] estimated that between 1766-1771, a sum of Rs. 21,72,102 was collected as *Khilat Bha, Poostbundy* and *Resum Nazarana,* all *abwabs.* Mr. Boughton, an officer in district Rajshahy, Bengal, remarked: "These taxes, arbitrarily imposed and oppressively collected, through the rapacity and licentiousness of *Amils* and their agents, have accelerated the general decline in agriculture and manufacture."[3]

The Fire Of Starvation Was Aflame

Beginning from 1770, famines of varying intensity recurred in India again and again all through British rule. And just as there was no end to the famines, so also there apparently was no end to the Famine Commissions and high-level committees appointed to find out (please note the utter cussedness of it!) why they occurred and how they could be prevented. Even before the British quitted India, in line with tradition, a famine killing 35,00,000 ravaged Bengal and promptly was a Commission appointed, the Bengal (Woodhead) Famine Commission! We are reminded of a cryptic sentence in a statement by Shri Nehru on February 27, 1937. He said: "The fire of starvation is aflame and you cannot waste time in consultations." Consultations nevertheless merrily went on, commissions and committees continued to be appointed *ad nauseum.* As late as the end of the last century, two ponderous reports of two Famine Commissions appointed in 1878-80 and 1898 respectively, were published. Divided as the personnel of these Commissions were between downright apologists of British rule, and some well-meaning, rather liberal-minded English gentlemen, they remained a house divided, spoke and wrote voluminously, but piteously failed to point to a single solution for the unimaginable decadence of Indian agriculture. They, of course, mustered facts regarding famines which killed millions in India between 1865 and 1901. The information is compiled below:

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[1] Banerjee : **Early Land Revenue System in Bengal & Bihar**; footnote on p. 13.

[2] The proceedings of the trial of Warren Hastings abound in such cases. The Governor-General himself minted a fortune. Great fortunes sprang up like mushrooms. According to a list laid before Parliament, the Company and its employers got £60,00,000 from the Indians as gifts. It is also revealed that the 1769-1770 famine was manufactured because, when scarcity conditions appeared, the English bought up all the rice and refused to sell it again except at fabulous prices.

[3] Banerjee : **Early Land Revenue System in Bengal & Bihar,** p. 31.

TABULAR REPRESENTATION I

FAMINE DEATHS IN INDIA (1865-1901)

Year	Area	Mortality.
1865-66	Bihar and N. Bengal	1,35,000
"	Madras	4,50,000
1865-69	Rajputana	12,50,000
"	U.P.	6,00,000
"	Punjab	6,00,000
"	C.P.	2,50,000
"	Bombay	Not given, extensive emigration
1873-74	Bengal and Bihar	not given
"	U.P.	not given
1876-77	Bombay	estimates vary between 8,00,000 to 10,00,000
"	Hyderabad	70,000
1876-78	Madras and U.P.	Noteworthy for the imposition of "lb. ration," later withdrawn; the most terrible famine to that date known in India; the mortality was estimated by the Famine Commissioner in S. India at 52,50,000, though probably it was much more. Elsewhere it was 3 million. Total 82,50,000
"	Mysore (then under British administration)	11,00,000
1880	Deccan, S. Bombay, C.P. and Hyderabad	High prices, no relief measures, mortality not given.
1880	U.P.	—do—
1884	South and S. E. Punjab	Mortality not stated but vital statistics show an increase in deaths over previous years by 7,50,000
1899-1900	Most of the country west of Ganges, from the borders of Kashmir to Mysore with spots in Madras and from Sind to Orissa boundary	Crops and incidental losses estimated at £150 million; most widely extended and most terrible famine, according to Lord Curzon, known in Indian history; Mortality (official) 1,25,00,000, but the actual three or four times this.
1900	Raipur District.	40 per cent population on relief.
1901	Gujerat, Deccan, Bombay, Karnatak, part of Madras, S. Punjab	At least 7,50,000 *Total admitted (official) mortality in 47. years (1854-1901) is 2,88,25,000.*

Four Starvation Deaths Per Minute!

Lancet, the premier medical journal of the world, estimated that between 1891-1900, 19 million lives were lost in India owing to famine and famine diseases. Compare with this only 5 million lives lost in wars all the world over in more than a century, from 1793 to 1900. The foregoing official figures show over 1 million deaths on average per annum in the last decade of the last century. Two Indians passed away from starvation or starvation-induced diseases every minute of every day and every night from January 1, 1889, to September 30, 1901. During 1891-1900, the average has been four per minute.

Nehru On The Famines: 'A Bleeding Process With A Vengeance'

The wealth drained from India had not a little to do with famine conditions on the one hand here, and the marvellous prosperity of England during the same period on the other. Marx very aptly called it "a bleeding process with a vengeance."[1] Nehru has said :[2] "Bengal had the first full experience of British rule in India. That rule began with outright plunder, and a land revenue system which extracted the uttermost farthing not only from the living but also the dead cultivators. The English historians of India, Edward Thompson and G. T. Garrett, tell us that 'a gold-lust unequalled since the hysteria that took hold of the Spaniards of Cortes' and Pizarro's age filled the English mind. Bengal in particular was not to know peace again until she had been bled white.' 'For the monstrous financial immorality of the English conduct in India for many a year after this, Clive was largely responsible,'[3]—Clive the great Empire-builder whose statue faces the India Office in London today. It was pure loot. The 'Pagoda tree' was shaken again and again till the most terrible famines ravaged Bengal. This process was called trade later on but that made little difference. Government was this so-called trade, and trade was plunder. There are few instances in history of anything like it. And it must be remembered that this lasted, under various names and under different forms, not for a few years but for generations. The outright plunder gradually took the shape of legalised exploitation which, though not so obvious, was in reality worse. The corruption, venality, nepotism, violence and greed of money of these early generations of British rule in India is something which passes comprehension. It is significant that one of the Hindustani words which has become part of the English language is 'loot'. Says Edward Thompson, and this does not refer to Bengal only, 'one remembers the early history of British India which is perhaps the world's high watermark of graft.' "

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[1] Marx's letter to Danielson dated London, 19 February, 1831. Marx prefaced the above ejaculation with the following : "What the English take from them annually in the form of rent, dividends for railways useless to the Hindus; pensions for military and civil service men, for Afghanistan and other wars, etc., etc.,—what they take from them *without any equivalent* and quite apart from what they appropriate to themselves annually *within* India, speaking only of the *value of the commodities* the Indians have gratuitously and annually to *send over* to England—it amounts to *more than the total sum of income of the sixty millions of agricultural and industrial labourers of India.*" (Correspondence of Marx & Engels, Op cit., pp., 385-368).

[2] **Discovery of India, Op. cit., pp. 349-350.**

[3] **Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India by Edward Thompson and G. T Garrett, London, 1935.**

The 'Inordinate Greed' And The Village Communities

Due to this graft, this "inordinate greed," coupled as it was with a "ruthlessly thorough method of revenue collection," and destroying as it did the Indian peasant by the million, there is hardly any wonder, the classic, ancient, traditional form of village organisation under which these millions had lived for centuries was also destroyed. A similar 'greedy' situation played an identical role in Europe in the 14th and 15th centuries. The increased trade and commerce in the late middle ages, the consequent strides of exchange or money economy, profoundly disturbed the feudal nobility whose basis was traditional 'natural' economy. The lord's need for cash grew, the exploitation of the peasants was intensified, and the peasants left the villages for the rising cities, which were fast becoming the centres of the new money economy. This flight of the peasantry completed the process of the devastation of the village communities, which had set in earlier. The point to be noted is that the devastation of village communities in the West was accompanied by a decrease in rural population, which found gainful employment in industries rising in the new cities.

The picture in India, apart from the devastation part of it, is quite different. The destruction of village communities in the West started a process which weakened feudalism and ultimately ended it. The destruction of village communities in India was accompanied by the creation of superior feudal interests in our villages, where such superior rights had never existed. Again, whereas industries were springing up in the West to absorb the population leaving agriculture, in India, on the other hand, there was a large-scale destruction of industries and handicrafts, and the millions thus deprived of their traditional occupations, fell back upon land for their livelihood. Thus, far from the process of destruction of village communities being accompanied by a decrease in rural population, in India the pressure on land increased and increased, and an ever larger percentage of population came to depend upon agriculture.[1]

The Destruction Of India's Hand Industries

Despite the extortions, exactions and the miseries heaped, despite the fact that agriculture for the overwhelming majority ceased to be an unprofitable proposition, despite the splitting up and fragmentation of holdings, the growing debt burdens and the increasing tempo of zamindari *zoolums*, the peasant clung to his holding with an amazing tenancity, because no other avenues of employment were open to him. Before the coming of the British, India's flourishing village industry was a source of livelihood for millions of our villagers.

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[1] Nehru puts it this way: "India became progressively ruralised. In every progressive country there has been, during the past century, a shift of population from agriculture to industry, from village to town; in India this process was reversed as a result of British policy." (**Discovery of India**, p. 352.)

Many cultivators supplemented their income by adopting them as subsidiary occupations. Spinning and weaving of fine cotton and silk yarns and cloth, manufacture of excellent carpets, *durries* and blankets, wood-work and cane-work, manufacture of earthen and brass wares and innumerable other industries were an important and inseparable part of our rural economy. The British destroyed them with the result that millions were deprived of their source of living and subsidiary incomes and had to fall back upon agriculture. Desperately these millions strove to make both ends meet by getting a strip of land for cultivation, desperately they strove to avoid eviction for non-payment of rents, and in the process sank below the subsistence level in spite of having recourse to the money-lender. No migration to cities was possible because unemployment existed there as well, and it held out the dismal prospect of losing even the little amenities of village life. And so the peasant clung to his pitiful plot and his miserable village occupation with a desperation born out of starvation.

The British Policy Of Strangulation

This destruction of Indian industries was deliberately and forcibly accomplished. Its effects are to be specially observable over India's texile industry. As Marx observed,[1] "from immemorial times Europe received the admirable textures of Indian labour." The rising machine industry of Britain could not compete with Indian textiles and had to be protected by high duties. We reproduce below a table[2] showing import duties in England on certain East Indian goods for home consumption as it obtained in 1803 :

TABLE 12

Particulars	Import duty (On every 100 £ of the value)		
	£.	Sh.	d.
1. Calicoes	50	0	0
2. Cotton, manufactures of	52	0	0
3. Handkerchiefs, (different types)	25	0	0
4. Muslins plain, nonquin cloths, etc.	20	0	0
5. Stockings of cotton	52	0	0
6. Thread, viz., cotton	52	0	0
7. Glass, all varieties	70	0	0
8. Lacquered ware	50	0	0
9. Chemical oil	50	0	0
10. Prints (coloured)	50	0	0

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[1] Articles on India, Op. cit, p. 22.

[2] 'A Practical Book of Customs upon all Foreign Articles Imported; London, Edward James Mascall, Long-Room, Customs House, Royal Exchange, 1803. Quoted by Dr. Motilal Gupta in Problems of Unemployment in India, Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, 1955.

The British intruder broke up the Indian handloom and destroyed the spinning wheel. India, "the Lancashire of the Eastern world," no more remained a manufacturing country but became a consumer of British goods. Nehru has said :[1] "The current which was flowing from India bearing Indian goods to foreign countries, and bringing back gold and silver, was reversed. Henceforth foreign goods came to India and gold and silver went out of it." The following figures[2] show the value of cotton goods alone sent out from England to ports east of Cape of Good Hope, mainly to India, during the 20 years from 1793 to 1813 :

TABLE 13

Year ending 5th January			Year ending 5th January		
1794	..	£156	1804	..	£5,936
1795	..	£717	1805	..	£31,943
1796	..	£112	1806	..	£48,525
1797	..	£2,501	1807	..	£46,549
1798	..	£4,436	1808	..	£69,841
1799	..	£7,317	1809	..	£118,408
1800	..	£19,575	1810	..	£74,695
1801	..	£21,200	1811	..	£114,649
1802	..	£16,191	1812	..	£107,306
1803	..	£27,876	1813	..	£108,824

Bones Of Cotton Weavers Bleached The Plains Of India!

This dumping of Indian markets with British machine manufactures was more and more intensified along with increasing control of Britain over greater and greater tracts of the Indian sub-continent. And while everything was done to destroy Indian industries, the fullest facilities were given for the import of British goods. The following table[3] shows duties on the imports of British goods in India in 1852 :

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[1] **Glimpses of World History, Op. cit.; p. 419.**

[2] Romesh Dutt : **The Economic History of India under Early British Rule,** Op. cit., p. 257.

[3] Romesh Dutt : **The Economic History of India in the Victorian Age, VIth Edition,** London, 1950; p. 157.

TABLE 14

Articles	Import Duty (per cent *ad valorem*)
1. Books, British	Free
2. Books, foreign	3.0
3. Coffee	7.5
4. Cotton and silk piece goods, British	5.0
5. Cotton and silk piece goods, Foreign	10.0
6. Cotton thread, twist and yarn, British	3.5
7. Cotton thread, twist and yarn, Foreign	7.0
8. Horses and other animals	Free
9. Metals, British	5.0
10. Metals, Foreign	10.0
11. Woollens, British	5.0
12. Woollens, Foreign	10.0

Marx has remarked that England "inundated the very mother country of cotton with cottons."[1] Nehru says that "this spreading, creeping movement of British goods, chiefly cloth, brought death to the hand industries of India." Of the miseries heaped on the Indian artisan, Nehru quotes a British Governor-General reporting in 1835 that "the misery hardly finds a parallel in the history of commerce. The bones of the cotton-weavers are bleaching the plains of India."[2]

Why The *Raison d'etre* Of Village Communities Ceased

The extortion of land revenue and the destruction of handicrafts was accompanied by a policy of land settlement with individual cultivators. When a settlement was made with each individual cultivator, the *raison d'etre* of village communities ceased. The English brought with them the British conceptions of landlordism and forced it down upon India. This was in sharp contrast to the position in India. Paragraphs 42 of Secretary of States' Despatch (Revenue) No. 14, dated 9th July, 1862, said: "The land revenue of India, as of all eastern countries, is less to be regarded as a tax on the landowners than as the result of a kind of joint ownership in the soil or its produce, under which the latter is divided in unequal and generally in undefined proportions between the ostensible proprietors and the State :"[3] We have, in the course of this study, referred to the customary laws and usages which continued in Indian villages from immemorial times. Innumerable British officials and scores of official despatches and reports have recorded this peculiar, and to them amazing, phenomenon which they observed in India. Among all these, Henry Sumner Maine attempted a scientific study, and what he said and wrote about them, perfunctory, incomplete, and at places even wrong and misinformed as it is,[1] has immortalised him in the history of jurisprudence. He pointed out that the "smaller organic groups of Indian society. . .are constantly dwelling on traditions of a certain sort, they are so constituted that one man's interests and impressions correct those of another, and some of them have, in their council of elders, a permanent machinery for declaring traditional usage, and solving doubtful points;" that "there exist in India several—and it may even be said, many—considerable bodies of customary law......(and) there can be no reasonable doubt that all this customary law is of very great antiquity." Further, "it is impossible to apply these terms, *command, sovereign, obligation, sanction, right,* to the customary law under which the Indian village communities have lived for centuries, practically knowing no other law civilly obligatory..... The council of village elders does not command anything, it merely declares what has always been....their (the customary laws'—*author*) antiquity is by itself assumed to be a sufficient reason for obeying them."[2]

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[1] Articles on India, Op. cit., p. 22.

[2] Glimpses of World History, Op. cit., p. 419.

[3] See Punjab Settlement Manual by Douie; Op. cit.; footnote third, on p. 1.

Indian Customary Law Treated With Contempt

The British conquerors treated this great body of unwritten custom and usage with contempt and threw it overboard. As early as 1830, in his famous minute, Sir Charles Metcalfe, then a member of the Governor-General's Council, and afterwards Acting Governor-General of India, said that he dreaded "everything that has a tendency to break up" the village communities, and he was "fearful that a revenue settlement with each individual cultivator ......instead of one with the village community through their representatives, the headman, might have such a tendency."[1] Maine also observed that in their land revenue settlements, the British were selecting individuals and making them responsible for revenue payments, and were reducing to writing the rights of these persons in the soil, and their supposed relation to all other rural groups, with an exhaustiveness unprecedented in Indian history. And he said that in the type of customary societies found in India "the mere definition of a right immensely increases its strength," and that "all agrarian rights, whether superior or subordinate to those of the person held responsible to Government, have a steady tendency to decay."[2] And he feebly protested: "There seems to me the heaviest presumption against the existence in any part of India of a form of ownership conferring the exact rights on the proprietor which are given by the English ownership in fee-simple."[3]

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[1] See Chapter entitled "Sir Henry Sumner Maine : Analyst of British India" by Daniel Thorner, in **Some Modern Historians of Britain,** edited by Herman Ausubel and Bartlet Brebuer, New York, 1951. Maine was a sickly man, and his whole knowledge is based on what he heard from Lord Lawrence, Governor-General of India during virtually all of Maine's time here, and Sir George Campbell, Chief Commissioner of the Central Province and sometimes Lieut. Governor of Bengal. He never made on-the-spot investigations. He saw, whatever little he did, of India in his annual trips from Calcutta to Simla for the summer months, this annual exodus of the Govt. Headquarters being undertaken at the cost of the Indian tax-payers because Calcutta became too hot for the white gentry. Maine wrote that he had made every effort "to control the statements of each informant by those of others". We can well imagine how much these top rulers could possibly know of the distant and outlying villages which, for all we know, they may have never seen. These 'informants', ill-informed as they were, could hardly be an adequate substitute for actual field work. As an example of his ignorance we would cite his statement that "each of the Indian sacred rivers loses in time its sanctity." Instances can be multiplied but we would forbear.

[2] **Village Communities in the East & West,** Op. cit., pp. 57-58, 65-68

The Essence Of British Policy

Metcalfe and Maine can hardly be expected to know that it was the inexorable law of capitalism and imperialism at work in India, of which they were agents. As Nehru puts it:[4] "The feudal landlords and their kind who came from England to rule over India had the landlord's view of the world. To them India was a vast estate belonging to the East India Company, and the landlord was the best and the natural representative of his estate and his tenants."

The essence of British land revenue policy was to open up the vast and rich Indian hinterland for purposes of capitalist-imperialist exploitation. The self-sufficient, natural economy of the Indian villages, producing for use, was mercilessly broken up and linked with the world market. But the system of revenue settlement was made extremely wooden and remained completely uninfluenced by the vagaries of market prices. The incursion of world economy into the self-sufficient economies of our villages had another consequence. It compelled an increase in the production of commercial crops. Acreages under cotton, sugarcane, jute, oilseeds, etc., increased considerably. The world-wide market connections created a whole set of middlemen in the form of wholesale dealers and exporters. Taking advantage of their superior economic position, they appropriated a very large share of the profits of the peasantry. Further, the incursion of money economy through the commercial crops forced the peasants more and more into the clutches of the money-lender.

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[1] Quoted from Romesh Dutt's **Economic History of India under Early British Rule, Op. cit., p. 387.**

[2] **Village Communities in the East & West, Op. cit., p. 150**

[3] **Ibid, p. 160.**

[4] **Discovery of India, Op. cit., p. 342.**

Domination Of World Market On Agrarian Economy

This introduction of money economy, coinciding as it did with conferral of rights of landownership over a class of people empowered to increase rents and evict tenants, had the effect of bringing greater and greater quantities of agricultural products under the domination of world market. We will illustrate this by an example from Kerala.[1] The export of coffee in 1029 Malayalam Era (M.E.), that is, 1853-54, was to the value of Rs. 6,553 only. It grew to Rs. 37,370 in the next 8 years and to Rs. 1,87,875 in the next 76 years. There was no export of rubber, tea or cardamom in 1029 M.E., but by 1113 M.E. (1937-38), these commodities were exported to the value of Rs. 74,89,864, Rs. 2,25,61,823 and Rs. 33,01,502, respectively. Similarly, the export of cocoanut oil rose from Rs. 1,27,395 in 1853-54 to Rs. 1,34,649 in 1861-62 and to Rs. 59,51,449 in 1937-38. The export of coir rose from Rs. 92,427 to Rs. 5,93,926 and Rs. 1,64,10,624 in the same period. This increase in the export of money crops expresses the profound transformation in the economy of Kerala. Four or five centuries ago, Kerala was self-sufficient in rice. Now the local production is less than 50 per cent of the consumption and 60 per cent of the local needs is supplied from abroad. According to S. Parameswaran, the average annual import of rice during the 7 years 1050 to 1056 M.E. (that is, 1874-75 to 1880-81) was to the value of Rs. 12,11,611. This grew in the next five decades to Rs. 15,00,380, Rs. 24,70,120, Rs. 52,22,378, Rs. 1,41,61,305 and Rs. 2,64,20,189 respectively.

Producers Separated From Means Of Production: Land Becomes A Commodity

Thus, under the new dispensation, the Indian villager, who traditionally got all his requirements in his own village, was now compelled to go to the market to sell his produce and purchase his consumption goods, and thus became increasingly dependent on the world market. And with every cyclical crisis of capitalism in the world, he was ruined. And thus increasingly our agricultural pattern assumed a form under which the producers were separated from the means of production, land itself became a commodity, and land monopolies developed. All British land policies and legislations had the effect of turning agricultural products as well as land itself into marketable commodities. We eproduce the following table[2] showing sales and mortgages of and in Madras in 1877-78 and the average of the decade 1890-1900 :

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[1] Quoted from Peasant Question in Kerala by S. Parameswaran, People's Publishing House, Bombay, 1951, pp. 5-6.

[2] Land Revenue Policy of the Indian Government, Op. cit., p. 202.

TABLE 15

SALES IN				MORTGAGES IN			
1877-78		Annual average during 1890-1900.		1877-78		Annual average during 1890-1900	
No.	Value in lakhs Rs.	No.	Value in lakhs Rs.	No.	Value in lakhs Rs.	No.	Value in lakhs Rs.
75,864	254.66	2,54,302	503.71	1,31,082	393.59	3,62,428	707.77

Conclusion

And now we will conclude this woeful tale. The *Report of th* *Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee*[1] has concluded its ver brief survey of British impact on our agriculture with the followin quotation of Marx : "If any nation's history, then it is the histor of English management of India which is a string of unsuccessfu and really absurd (and in practice infamous) experiments i economics. In Bengal they created a caricature of English lande property on a large scale, in south-eastern India a caricature o small allotment property; in the north-west they transformed t the utmost of their ability the Indian commune with commo ownership of the soil into a caricature of itself."[2]

The English exerted in India their direct political and economi power as rulers and landlords for disrupting our age-old Villag Panchayats; and the destruction of handicrafts, which was a integral part of the small well-knit economic organisation of th village, was accomplished simultaneously.

In conclusion, we would like to add that in describing th horrors perpetrated in India by the British, we have been actuate by no spirit of ill-will or rancour against the English nation. Thi ill-will and anger possessed hundreds of young men in India i the first three decades of this century and passions were high. Th teachings of Mahatama Gandhi, his emphasis on truth, love, an non-violence, however, ultimately triumphed over the tren represented by Khudiram Bose, Kartar Singh, Ram Prasad Bismi Bhagat Singh, Chandra Shekhar Azad, and other martyrs c hallowed memory.

Nehru On New Indo-British Relations

If we have considered the description of the destructio wrought by the British as essential for our historical analysis, is because, as Nehru has put it, "Corpses cannot be easily ove looked; they come in the way".[1] And even if men may overlook them, history cannot. History is a merciless judge, and before the bar of history the English domination of India will ever remain as one of the vilest and most abhorrent chapters in the story of relationships between two peoples. But this chapter is now closed and a new one has opened. Large-hearted and forgiving as the Orientals are, the most amazing feature of post-Independence India is the manner in which the Indian people have forgotten the bitterness and acrimony towards the former British rulers, and the large fund of goodwill that exists here for the British people. This new relationship was expressed by our Prime Minister at a banquet in honour of Sir Anthony Eden (then Britain's Foreign Minister) at New Delhi on March 3, 1955. Referring to the history of contacts between India and England, he said that it was *"a long history in which much had happened which was not agreeable to many people, which had even created bitterness and yet we meet here today......in a spirit of friendship and co-operation. I always thought that a rather remarkable thing and not easy to find a parallel in history......After a lengthy period of good and ill both, we came to an agreement and forged a new type of relationship....a relationship of being completely independent and yet, an attempt to be friendly with each other, to co-operate with each other."*

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[1] Published by the All India Congress Committee, 2nd Edition, 1951: p 34.

[2] **Capital, Vol. III, XX,** pp. 392-393.

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[1] **Discovery of India, Op. cit., p. 3.**

CHAPTER VII

THE GREAT CHALLENGE

"Economic equality is the master key to non-violent independence. Working for economic equality means abolishing the eternal conflict between capital and labour. It means the levelling down of the few rich in whose hands is concentrated the bulk of nations' wealth on the one hand, and the levelling up of the semi-starved naked millions on the other. A non-violent system of Government is clearly an impossibility so long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persists. The contrast between the palaces of New Delhi and the miserable howels of the poor labouring class nearby cannot last one day in a free India in which the poor will enjoy the same rights as the richest in the land. A violent and a bloody revolution is a certainty one day unless there is a voluntary abdication of riches and the power that riches give and sharing them for the common good."

—MAHATMA GANDHI
(Constructive Programme).

"Force is the midwife of every old society which is pregnant with the new. It is the instrument with whose aid social movement forces its way and shatters the dead fossilised political forms."

—ENGELS

PATIENCE and endurance of suffering has been a characteristic feature of the peasantry of all countries. With indescribable moral and physical conditions of life, subjected to indignities and horrors from generation to generation, carrying the burden of all the upper stratas of society, they yet remained generally submissive. But occasions did arise when things became unbearable and the peasantry was roused into a spontaneous outburst of indignation and broke out into insurrection like the fury of the elements. Historians and politicians usually give the name of spontaneous insurrection to a movement of the masses united by a common hostility against the old regime, but not having a clear aim, deliberated methods of struggle, or a leadership consciously showing the way to victory. And many historians have recognised such spontaneous insurrections as a necessary evil the responsibility for which falls on the old regime.

The history of the struggle of the peasantry against their oppressors has been broadly divided into three periods : (i) From the middle ages to the time of the Great French Revolution (i.e., upto the 18th Century); (ii) From the 18th Century to the period of the Russian Revolution of 1917; (iii) The modern period.

We have briefly referred to the peasant revolts in the West in the first and second periods in an earlier Chapter. In the first period the peasants rose elementally and fought their battles all alone, unaided by any strata of society. These revolts were always unorganised and peasants acted in an isolated manner. One district would decide on revolt after its neighbour had laid down arms. There was much bloodshed and violence and the peasants were always crushed.

In the second period, as in the French Revolution, the new class of merchants and traders, the *bourgeoisie,* and the city middle class as also the urban working class, made common cause with the peasants in their fight against feudalism. As this struggle developed, differences between the trading classes and the peasantry started coming on top. In later stages the traders came to an understanding with the aristocracy, and this latter was thus able to retain large estates, and feudal vestiges continued. These struggles, nevertheless, freed the peasants of Western Europe from the oppressive survivals of serfdom and largely increased the amount of land held by the peasantry. Having gained these concessions, the peasants became pacified and did not support the more radical forces.

Peaceful Traditions Of Indian Peasantry

In contrast to this turbulence of the peasantry in the West, the Indian peasantry hardly ever had to rise in revolt against the ruling classes during these centuries. The comparative prosperity of the land, and the village communal system, together combined to prevent the development of a situation whereunder peasant uprisings and violence became inevitable in the West. There are hardly any traditions of a revolutionary peasant movement in pre-British India. Some revolts did take place at the end of the 17th century, towards he end of Aurangzeb's rule, when the decline of the Moghal administration had commenced and feudal types of superior landholding rights had appeared. Nehru mentions of the rebellion of he Jat peasants of Mathura in 1669. "They were suppressed repeatedly, but they rose again and again for over thirty years, till Aurangzeb's death." Another was the Satnami rebellion. Satnamis were a Hindu sect of common folk, and this was a poor people's ising.[1]

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[1] Nehru quotes a Moghal noble of the time describing them in disgust as "a gang of bloody miserable rebels, goldsmiths, carpenters, sweepers, tanners and other ignoble beings." In his opinion it was a scandalous thing for such "ignoble persons" to rise against their superiors". (Glimpses of the World History, Op. cit., p. 319).

Peasant Revolts Under British Rule

This picture of a peaceful peasantry underwent a fundamental transformation under British rule. The pauperisation of the Indian peasantry under the British was by no means a peaceful process. There were occasional peasant revolts. These were invariably violent and bloody, and were always crushed with an iron hand, leaving no legacy behind except the bitterest memories among those who survived.[1]

Mention may be made of the Moplah revolts in South Malabar. The well-known 1921 Moplah revolt (August-November) was but the last in the series which had started a century earlier. Between 1821 and 1921, there were about fifty peasant revolts in the area, all directed against the Government and the landlords, and occasionally taking a religious or communal tinge on account of specific local situation but always economic in their inner content. Only in the period of seventeen years, between 1836 and 1853, there had been no less than 22 kisan uprisings there. These revolts erupted every now and then and resulted in the Malabar Tenancy Act of 1887. The problems of peasant discontent, however remained and revolts continued.

Deccan peasant uprisings between 1845 and 1875 are also noted for their violence and spontaneity. The Bheels and other oppressed and down-trodden elements of peasant society in Deccan and Gujrat attacked the money-lenders who had by their relentless greed and incessant exploitation reduced these unfortunate people to paupers and snatched away from them their lands and scanty belongings. This money-lending class, mostly of Marwaris, became so numerous and all-powerful that Mr. Auckland Colvin, in his Minute on the Deccan riots wrote : "It promises to become not a ryotwari, but a Marwari settlement." The infuriated peasants deprived of their land and recklessly rack-rented, rose in the districts of Poona, Ahmednagar, Satara, Ratnagiri, Sholapur Ahmedabad, Kaira, etc., attacked the houses of the money-lenders looted and burnt them, in particular account books. These outbursts continued for 30 years, after which an enquiry commission was appointed by the Government and the Deccan Agriculturis Relief Act was enacted.

The Santhal insurrection of 1855 surpassed these revolts in fury and magnitude. Between the years 1838-1855, Santhals in Santhal Parganas and Birbhum districts had been fleeced by the zamindars, the money-lenders and the Government officials, and the 1855 insurrection was the cumulative effect of all this torture an prolonged suffering. On June 30, 1855, lakhs of Santhals collected under their religious leaders whose bodyguard alone was estimated about 30,000 men. From the hilly tracts they descended to the plains of Birbhum where a clash occurred with the authorities. They were butchered like wild beasts. The revolt ended in fiasco.

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[1] For a brief and informative study of these peasant uprisings in India betwee 1850-1900, the reader is referred to L. Natarjan's **Peasant Uprisings in Indi** (Peoples' Publishing House, Bombay, 1953).

About the same time, in the middle of the 19th century (1860), there were the famous Indigo Revolts in Bengal. The English Indigo planters made very hard terms with their tenants about the cultivation of indigo plants. The tenants were compelled to cultivate the plant in a certain portion of their holding and then were forced to sell it at a fixed rate to the English. The British Government made laws to aid the English planters. These cruel laws and their equally heartless execution reduced the tenants to serfs and slaves of the planters in many respects. The chain of Indigo factories, and the British and Indian agents attached to them terrorised the peasants into submission and perpetrated untold atrocities and extracted the utmost from the peasants. Restlessness grew. A Bengali drama, *Nil Darpan* (i.e., the mirror of indigo), describing the miseries of the Bengal peasantry created a great stir. Exasperated by their misery, the peasants revolted. Sacking of indigo factories and looting and murdering of the British planters spread widely. The Government retaliated with full force, and the peasants were crushed into submission.

Mahatma Gandhi's Appearance On The Indian Scene

It would thus be seen that violence and bloodshed became inevitable wherever and whenever peasant grievances and exploitation continued unredressed and unabated. The Father of the Nation, when he emerged on the Indian scene, and took over leadership of the National Movement, was quite aware of this latent force for violence. Wedded as he was to non-violent methods, his whole technique of constructive work and peaceful mass movement was designed to avoid violence which was latent in the explosive agrarian situation of the country. His unique weapons played a great and glorious role in the emancipation of India. It unified the people of India in their resistance to British Imperialism. It abjured force and violence, and yet led the people forward from passive submission to mass resistance. The history of the Indian national struggle under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership reveals that he always restricted and narrowed the movement so as to keep it within peaceful limits.

Peaceful change and transformation was always the fondest wish and desire of Gandhiji. Indeed, before the British quitted India, Mahatma Gandhi often claimed that because of his unique method he was able to stand between Imperialism and revolution.

When Gandhiji advised acceptance of Ministries by the Congress in 1937, he declared that he decided upon that course because the only alternatives were a bloody revolution or mass satyagraha on an unprecedented scale, and he wanted to avoid both.

Congress Eschews Violence And Bloody Conflict

In fact the entire political career of Mahatma Gandhi and of the Congress under his leadership, has been to march towards their goal avoiding all violence and bloody conflict. It may well be borne in mind that while the great national awakening generated by the Congress in India brought about an unprecedented unleashing of mass energy and movement, from which naturally, and in due course, flowed class awakening, class consciousness and class organisations, the Congress by itself, officially, never encouraged class antagonisms and conflicts. The main point which deterred the Congress from this course was the consideration that violence and bloodshed are the necessary concomitants of preachings of class hatred. Following the violence of the people in Ramdurg State in 1939, which followed in the wake of a popular upsurge and was crushed mercilessly by the police, and the military, Mahatma Gandhi declared: "It is clear warning to all workers in the field, and everyone must realise that before one feels sure that the people are rightly trained and disciplined in non-violence, it is unwise to begin any great mass movement."

Programmatic Advance Of Congress Economic Policies

Not that Gandhiji and the Congress were not aware of the existence of class conflicts. This awareness was always there. Following the great depression of 1929, militant working class organisations grew up in Bombay, Calcutta and other industrial centres, they fought pitched strike battles against the millowners, and raised class demands which found an echo in the country and affected the peasantry as well. The Congress was quick to realise that this new trend would definitely culminate in class battles and violence, and in its anxiety to achieve peaceful advance, it affected great advances in its economic policies. Throughout its long history, the Indian National Congress has exhibited an uncanny capacity to react to mass urges and desires, and it soon realised that for India's onward march to be peaceful, the greatest advance will have to be registered in the agrarian sector. This, among other things, explains the great programmatic advances registered in Congress economic policies before World War II, beginning with the Lucknow Congress of 1936 and ending with the historic August 8, 1942, meeting of the A.I.C.C.

This approach of the Congress to India's problems has always been opposed by another trend, the leftist trend as it has been called. Composed of different parties and splinter groups, forming and reforming, this trend, based on class conflict and class war, has always challenged Congress policies and continues to do so today. According to it, Congress policies are reformist, are class-collaborationist, and are many other things, an entire vocabulary being mustered to establish the assertion. And against Congress methods and organisation are posed theories of class struggle and class organisations. Nor is this trend such as to be ignored. It has persisted, has grown in strength and relapsed into weakness and inactivity, but has nevertheless continued.

The Indian situation, the problems of the dire poverty of our peasantry and people, offers it fertile soil. And in the new conditions of today, after our freedom, if our development and advance has to be peaceful and the conflicts are to be reconciled and ultimately obliterated, rather than sharpened and led to a blow-up, the Village Panchayats are required to play a very positive and decisive role in our countryside. In order that this task may be better discharged by all those interested in peaceful advance, it is essential that the basic approach of this rival trend be fully and thoroughly grasped.

The Rival Trend: Basic Tenets Of Marxism-Leninism

This trend, varying in shades and emphasis, basically draws its inspirations from what is well known as Marxism-Leninism. Marx, Engels and Lenin, throughout their writings have emphasised that there is no question of realising their objective of emancipating the masses without overthrowing the social and economic structure of the State, "that organised body of force and violence." They say that an assault on the State, which keeps together the structure of the exploiting society and defends it at every stage by the use of violence against the exploited is inevitable. The inevitability of violent revolution with reference to the "bourgeois" state is the essence of the teachings of Marx and Engels. Lenin further stressed the point and developed the idea in his book *State and Revolution.* In this work he drew pointed attention to the following concluding passage in the *Communist Manifesto* of Marx and Engels: "Communists scorn to hide their views and aims. They openly declare that their purposes can only be achieved by the forcible overthrow of the whole extant social order. Let the ruling class tremble at the prospect of Communist Revolution. Proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win." And then Lenin says in his *State And Revolution:* "The necessity of systematically fostering among the masses this and this point of view about violent revolution lies at the root of the *whole* of Marx and Engels' teaching."

In his essay on *Our Programme*, Lenin called upon his followers "to see under the disguise of ossified habits, political intrigues, intricate laws and cunning theories, the class struggle, the struggl between, on the one hand, the various species of the possessin classes, and on the other hand, the mass possessing no property the proletariat which leads all who possess nothing. It has mad clear the task of the revolutionary socialist party—not to set u projects for the transformation of society, not to preach sermon to the capitalists and their admirers, about improving the positio of the workers, not the instigation of conspiracies, but the organisation of the class struggle of the proletariat and the carrying on o this struggle, the final aim of which is the seizure of political powe by the proletariat and the organisation of a socialist society." Th leaders of revolutionary socialism, however, always emphasised tha the proletariat could not succeed in its objective without winnin the support of the vast masses of the exploited peasantry. Th peasantry has been variously described by them as the "natura ally of the proletariat," as "the reservoir of revolution," etc.

Lenin On The Role Of The Peasantry

In fact the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks were divided i Russia, among other things, on the role of the peasantry in th revolution against Tsardom. The Mensheviks said that relianc on the peasantry would be wrong as Tsardom would be backe not only by the landlords but also by the masses of ignorant and backward peasantry who looked to the Tsar with reverence and aw as the Father of the people. This feeling towards the Tsar wa in fact present among the city working classes too, but th Bolsheviks were confident that in the revolutionary crisis the clas forces arrayed against them would be in a state of confusion an by their own actions will alienate the goodwill that existed for the among the people. And then it would precisely be the ignoran and backward peasantry who, because of their terrible conditions extreme exploitation and age-old misery, would become allies o the proletariat and led by it. And then, they believed, the proletariat as the leading driving force, united with the vast masse of the peasantry, will crush the resistance of the autocracy. An history proved that the Bolsheviks were correct.

Lenin repeatedly hammered the need to win over the peasantry He said: "It would be worse than blunder, it would be a crim to send the vanguard into the fighting line before the class as whole, the broad mass is ready to support it." In his *Problems o Leninism*, Stalin repeats: "It is the essence of the Leninis leadership that the vanguard should get the rearguard to follow that the vanguard should move onward without breaking away fro the masses. But in order that the vanguard might not break awa from the masses, that the vanguard should lead behind it th millions, there is one essential condition that is of decisive import, namely, that the masses themselves should become convinced from their own experience of the correctness of the instructions, policy and slogans of the vanguard." In order to achieve this proletarian hegemony, Lenin directed: "The tasks of the conscious proletariat consisted in a pitiless rending of the veil and the removing of all those numerous petty bourgeois deceits, quasi-socialistic phrases, infantile, naive expectations which the peasants connected with agrarian upheavals. Their removal must take place not in order to placate and pacify the peasants, but in order to awaken in the masses a steel-tempered, unshakable and determined revolutionary spirit. Without this revolutionary spirit, without an obstinate and merciless fight of the peasant masses, confiscation (of squire's land), the republic, universal, direct, equal and secret suffrage were hopeless and utopian."

Decisions Of The IInd World Congress Of The Comintern

With their world revolutionary perspective, the leaders of revolutionary socialism always viewed the huge mass of exploited peasantry in the colonies and semi-colonies as reservoirs of world revolution, who, along with the proletarians of the advanced capitalist countries would finally ring the death-knell of world imperialism. The success of Marxist-Leninist strategy in the November Revolution in Russia immensely strengthened their forces. Lenin lost no time in collecting together all the Communist and national revolutionary elements from all over the world and formed the Communist nternational, better known as the Comintern. The following decision was arrived by this International as early as 1922, in its second World Congress, about work in the colonies: "The Communist International should form temporary understandings, even alliances, with the bourgeois democracy of the colonies and the backward countries, but not merge with it, unconditionally preserving he independence of the proletarian movement, even in its most embryonic form. We, as Communists, must and will support bourgeois emancipation movement in the colonial countries only n those cases when these movements are really revolutionary, when their representatives will not hinder us in educating and rganising the peasantry and the large masses of the exploited in he revolutionary spirit."

Decisions On The Peasant Question Of The IVth Congress Of Comintern

The IVth Congress of the International, held in 1923, called pon its adherents "to do their utmost to win over the rural working masses in accordance with the following instructions:

"(1) The mass of the rural proletarians and the poor peasants who do not possess enough land and must work part of the time for wages or are exploited in any other way by the big landlords or capitalists, can be freed from their present servitude and from want, which are inevitable under capitalism only by a proletarian revolution. This revolution will confiscate the land of the big landlords and all the means of production without compensation, putting them at the disposal of the workers, who will establish the Soviet State of the proletarians and working peasants in lieu of the government of the big landowners and the capitalists, thus paving the way to communism."

"(2) In the struggle against the government of the big landowners and the capitalists, the poor peasants and small holders are the natural allies of the industrial and agricultural proletariat. By joining in the struggle of the proletariat in the cities and the rural districts they will contribute to a great extent to the overthrow of the bourgeois state; while the urban proletariat seizes power and confiscates the means of production of the bourgeoisie, the rural proletariat and the poor peasantry take possession of the land, drive away the big landowners and put an end to the domination of the agrarians and the bourgeoisie in the country."

After saying that for this end it is necessary to remove 'reformist' influence over the peasantry and strengthen the Communist Party, the IVth Congress goes on to suggest the methods and tactics of work among the peasantry, calling upon its adherents to "be at the head of every struggle of the agricultural masses against the ruling classes. Linking up with the everyday demands of these workers under the capitalist system the Communist Party brings together the scattered forces of the rural working class, stimulates its will to fight, supports the struggle by bringing into it the forces of the industrial proletariat and indicates new ways and methods leading to the revolution."

Referring to colonial countries, and India particularly, the IVth Congress declared: "In the Colonial countries with an oppressed native population the national liberation struggle is conducted either by the entire population, as for instance in Turkey (in such a case the struggle of the oppressed peasantry against the big landlords will inevitably begin after the victorious solution of the national struggle) or the feudal landlords are allied with the imperialist robbers, as for instance in India, where the social struggle of the oppressed peasants coincides with the national liberation struggle." The Congress laid down the following for dealing with 'native feudal interest allied with the imperialist robbers': "Territories with strong survivals of feudalism, where the bourgeois revolution has not fully accomplished its task and where the big landowners still enjoy feudal rights and privileges, these rights and privileges must be brushed aside in the course of the struggle for the land which in this case is of paramount importance."

The Krestintern—International Peasant Council

In the same year, in Autumn 1923, the leaders of the Communist International created the International Peasant Council, the Krestintern. This body further amplified the strategy and tactics of the revolutionary peasant movement. It fixed its aim as the emancipation of the toiling peasantry from all the exploitation and oppression to which it was subjected. According to the Krestintern, the form of peasant exploitation varied in different countries, e.g., (i) Oppression and survivals of feudalism and serfdom; (ii) the Merchant Capitalists; (iii) The Capitalist Banks, these being supplemented in certain areas by cruel and severe national oppression. The Krestintern said: The varying conditions, the various types of enemies against which the fight has to be conducted, the varying demands which have to be put forward, would seem to render it impossible to unite the peasantry in a single struggle and subordinate them to common aims and a single leadership. After discussing the difficulties, the Krestintern arrived at the conclusion that they existed only on the surface and that all these various forms of exploitation have much in common. They are all equally subject to the exploitation of the imperialist bourgeosie, which under the conditions obtaining, was the principal and predominating form of capital which subordinates to itself all other forms. The Krestintern divided the revolutionary peasant movement in different countries in the following three groups:

(i) The colonial and semi-colonial countries in Asia and Africa, e.g., China, India, Korea, Indonesia, Syria, Mesopatamia, Arabia, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, etc.

(ii) The agrarian countries of Central Europe and Balkans, e.g., Poland, Rumania, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Greece, etc.

(iii) The countries of capitalist Europe and America, e.g., Germany, France, Sweden, Norway, U.S.A., Canada, etc.

Referring to the first category of countries, it was pointed out that here merchant capital is the exploiter. It forces down the prices of agricultural products through monopolies and inflates the price of manufactured goods. In this process of exploitation, merchant capital serves in the interest of and acts as the agent of finance capital, which wants first of all cheap raw material and then the highest possible profits from the sale of its finished products. This very finance-capital, the Krestintern said, is the principal and mortal enemy of the proletariat, and thus is created a community of interests between the proletariat and the peasantry and the necessity for a close alliance between them against the imperialist bourgeoisie and all other oppressors. At the same time, in these colonies, national oppression by imperialism brings suffering to other classes—the national bourgeoisie, the urban middle class, the intellectuals, etc.

Strategy Of Revolutionary Peasant Movement In Colonies

From this basic analysis was worked out the strategy of the revolutionary peasant movement for countries like India. It was laid down that the peasant organisations should place the national questions in the forefront of their revolutionary work. Thus was seen the possibility of united opposition to imperialism. The peasant organisations were, however, warned that in fighting foreign imperialism jointly with the bourgeoisie, they should not tone down or ignore the differences in the interest of the peasantry on the one hand, and bourgeoisie and landlords on the other. Therefore, "placing the national struggle in the forefront of their revolutionary work, and while striving to bring all classes and strata of the population which have not yet compromised with the imperialists into the struggle, the leaders of peasant movement in the East must establish peasant organisations independent of the leadership and influence of the bourgeoisie. They must explain to the peasants that their interests differ from those of the bourgeoisie and the big landlords."

Lenin's Interest In Indian Peasantry

When Krestintern was constituted and took these decisions, Lenin was already laid low by illness and was unable to react to events, but it is known that he took deep interest in the newspaper reports of the work of the Conference. Indeed, more than one evidence is available of the great interest which Lenin took in the possibilities of a revolutionary peasant movement in India. Dr. Bhupendra Datta has recorded that when, as an Indian revolutionary in exile, he went to Moscow in 1921 on invitation from the Comintern, and submitted a 'Thesis' to Lenin for his perusal through Comrade Rakosi, Lenin sent him the following note: "I have read your thesis. We should not discuss about the social classes. I think we should abide by my thesis on colonial question. Gather statistical facts about Peasant Leagues if they exist in India."[1]

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[1] **Dialectics of Land Economics of India**, Op. cit., Preface, Page iii. Dr. Datta has also given the following anecdote relating to Lenin's attitude to India : "In 1920, a band of noted Indian nationalists composed of the exiled Kumara Mahendra Pratap of Hathras, Prof. M. Barkatullah, Shri Trimul Acharya and others visited Lenin. Mahendra Pratap asked that great man whether he had read his pamphlets on "Religion of Love" sent beforehand. Lenin answered in the affirmative. When asked to express his reaction about it, Lenin answered : "Religion would not save the Indian people. Tolstoy and others like him tried the same thing in Russia but failed. Go back to India and preach class-struggle, and the road to freedom of India will be nearer." Then hearing that amongst the visitors there was one who had sprung from the peasant stock, Lenin turned his back to those bourgeois-revolutionaries, and interrogated that man named Ibrahim (he was Prof. Barkatullah's servant—*author*) for half an hour about the condition of the peasantry of the Punjab." (pp. iii-iv).

We have come across another reference by Lenin to India in an rticle by Afred Rosmer entitled "Moscow in Lenin's Days: 920-21."[1] Rosmer refers to the "relatively numerous" Indian deleation at the Second Congress of the Comintern in 1921, "headed y a capable man, Manabendra Nath Roy." Roy, according to Rosner, advanced the line that though the "Indian bourgeoisie" had a rogramme of national demands, yet the Indian Communists must ight against it, as against British Imperialism, since the former was lso an exploiter. Rosmer records: "Patiently Lenin replied to him xplaining that for a longer or shorter period of time the Indian Comnunist Party would be a small party with but few members, having nly weak resources, incapable of reaching, on the basis of its proramme and by means of its own activity, a substantial number of easants and workers. On the other hand, on the basis of demand or national independence, it would be possible to mobilise large nasses—experience had already demonstrated that amply—and it vas only in the course of this struggle that the Indian Communist Party would forge and develop its organisation to the point where it vould be in a position, once national demands were satisfied, to ttack the Indian bourgeoisie."

Late M. N. Roy's Early Attempts

It would appear that soon after the final line was decided about evolutionary work in colonial countries like India at the early Congresses of the Communist International, the late M. N. Roy took energetic steps to establish links with Indian revolutionaries and ympathisers. Pamphlets and manifestoes about this line for Indian revolution were distributed as early as 1922, at the 37th Session of he Indian National Congress at Gaya. This first group was, however, roped in the Cawnpore Bolshevik Conspiracy case of 1924-25, wherein S. A. Dange, Muzaffar Ahmad, Shaukat Usmani and some thers were tried and sentenced. A determined group was neverheless formed and started work among the working classes and the easantry. By 1927, the groups formed in different provinces of ndia created a Workers and Peasants Party and met in Conference in Meerut. Alarmed at these developments, and at the huge strike attles[2] in the textile and jute mills and the railways, the British

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[1] **The New International**, published from New York, issue of Summer, 1955. Mr. Rosmer, according to the editorial note over his article, is one of the founders of the Comintern. Apparently differences developed later and Rosmer broke away. **(See pp. 108-109).**

[2] Towards the end of 1927 there was a railway strike at Kharagpore near Calcutta. In 1928 a strike broke out in the Tata Iron and Steel Works involving about 18,000 workers. More important still was the great textile strike in Bombay, involving about 80,000 workers which dragged on for about six months. Following this there was a strike in the workshop of the East Indian Railway at Lillooah near Calcutta in which 10,000 workers were involved, in the Tin Plate Company at Jamshedpur in which 4,000 workers were involved, in the Oil & Petrol Works at Budge Budge in which 5,000 workers were involved, and also the great Jute strike in and about Calcutta involving about 2,00,000 workers. There was another Textile General Strike in Bombay in 1929, and a big strike of railway workers on the G.I.P. Railway.

Government again swooped down, arrested the leaders and launche
the famous Merrut Conspiracy Case in 1928-29.

The VIth Congress Of The Comintern On The Peasant Question In Colonies

In 1928, the Communist International made another major pro
nouncement on the question of revolution in colonies. The occasio
was the VIth Congress of the Communist International where Ott
Kussinin's Thesis[1] on problems of Colonial Revolution was adopte
This Thesis was adopted as against another Thesis by the late M. N
Roy, famous in Communist phraseology as the "Decolonisatio
Thesis," and it was after this that late Roy broke away from the Com
intern. The VIth World Congress Thesis said : "The basic tasks o
the Indian Communists consist in struggle against British imper
alism for the emanicipation of the country, for destruction of all relic
of feudalism, for the agrarian revolution and for establishment of th
dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry in the form of a Sovie
republic. These tasks can be successfully carried out only whe
there will be created a powerful Communist Party, which will be abl
to place itself at the head of the wide masses of the working clas
peasantry and all the toilers, and to lead them in the struggle agains
the feudal-imperialist bloc." The Indian Communists were directe
to "unmask the national reformism of the Indian National Congre
and oppose all the phrases of the Swarajists, Gandhists, etc., abou
passive resistance, with the irreconcilable slogan of struggle for th
emancipation of the country and the expulsion of the imperialists.'

And now the VIth World Congress directives for work amo
the peasantry.[3] "In relation to the peasantry and peasant orga
sations, the Indian Communists are faced above all with the task
acquainting the widest strata of the peasantry with the general d
mands of the Party in the agrarian question, for which purpose t

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[1] Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semi-colonies, People's Publish
House, Bombay, 1948.

[2] Ibid, pp. 55-56.

[3] The following evolution of the character of the colonial peasantry by the V
World Congress Thesis would be found interesting : "The peasantry, along w
the proletariat and in the character of its ally, represents a driving force of
revolution. The immense many-millioned peasant mass constitutes the ov
whelming majority of the population even in the most developed colonies
some colonies it is some 90 per cent of the population). The many millions
starving tenant-cultivators, petty peasants, oppressed by want and groaning un
all kinds of pre-capitalist and capitalist forms of exploitation, a considerable p
tion of them deprived of the possibility of cultivation even on the lands that t
rent, thrown out from the process of production and slowly dying from fam
and disease, village agricultural labourers—all these are the allies of the p
letariat in the village. The peasantry can only achieve its emancipation un
the leadership of the proletariat but the proletariat can only lead the bourge
democratic revolution to victory in union with the peasantry." (Ibid, p. 30).

Party must work out an agrarian programme of action. Through workers connected with the village, as well as directly, the Communist must stimulate the struggle of the peasantry for partial demands, and in the process of struggle organise peasant unions. It is essential to pay particular attention to make sure that the newly-created peasant organisations do not fall under the influence of exploiting strata in the village. It is necessary to give to the existing peasant organisations a concise programme of concrete demands and to support the activities of the peasants through demonstrations of workers in the town."[1]

"A Revolutionary Settlement Of The Peasant Question"

What, in fact, the Comintern Thesis advocated was "a revolutionary settlement of the peasant question." Such a settlement was necessary and essential because "The bourgeoisie of China, India and Egypt is by its immediate interest, so closely bound up with landlordism, with usury capital and with the exploitation of the peasant masses in general, that it takes its stand not only against the agrarian revolution but also against every decisive agrarian reform."[2] And so it directed the Communists in the colonies to always bear in mind that "The Proletariat can achieve its leading role in relation to the peasantry only under the conditions of unflinching struggle for its partial demands, for complete carrying through of the agrarian revolution, and only if it will lead the struggle of the wide masses of the peasantry for a revolutionary settlement of the agrarian question."[3]

Indian National Movement Steers Clear Of This Path Of Violence

The Indian National Movement steered clear of this path of revolution based on violence and adopted an entirely new technique nd method of achieving its objectives consistent with India's genius nd its unique and ancient traditions. There were sceptics, and heir number was not inconsiderable, who doubted the efficacy of on-violence and Mahatma Gandhi's methods for liberating India rom the clutches of a mighty Empire. To them violence and force eemed inevitable and natural for achieving the objective. But the niracle did happen, and on August 15, 1947, it was revealed that non-violence is efficacious enough to win the freedom of a huge sub-ontinent like India from the mighty British Empire which held it in its ocotopus grip for more than a century and a half. The question is naturally asked that if bloodshed and violence can be avoided in getting freedom from a foreign yoke, it should be still easier to solve the internal problems through the same non-violent methods and avoid class war and bloody conflicts. Indeed, years ago, in 1934, Jawaharlal Nehru thus expressed himself on the question in his *Autobiography*: ". . . . But, in theory, if it is possible to bring about a great political change by a non-violent technique, why should it not be equally possible to affect a radical social change by this method? If we can get political freedom and the elimination of British Imperialism from India non-violently, why should we not also solve the problem of the feudal princes and landlords and other social problems in the same way and establish a Socialist State."

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[1] Ibid, p. 56.

[2] The Thesis, in fact, goes further : "It (the bourgeoisie—*author*) is afraid, not without foundation, that even the mere open formulation of the agrarian question will stimulate and accelerate the growth of the process of revolutionary fermentation in the peasant masses. Thus the reformist bourgeoisie hardly dares to decide to approach practically this basic urgent question."

[3] Ibid, p. 30.

Communist Attack On Mahatma Gandhi & The Congress

Insistence of the Congress to stick to the peaceful technique of Mahatma Gandhi earned for it some of the most severe criticisms to which it has been subjected during its long history. This, in fact, has been one of the main burdens of Communist propaganda in India. Rajini Palme Dutt, the British Communist leader known for his great hand in the development of the Communist movements in India and its policies, in his book *India Today,* published in 1941-42, said: "The agrarian revolution cannot be side-stepped. It is the main driving force of change and the foundation stone of new India." Having always regarded the Indian National Congress, and its leadership, as representing the interests of the Indian capitalists, Rajini Palme Dutt observed: "The unwillingness of the Indian bourgeoisie to accept the necessity of the abolition of landlordism is governed, not only by the identity of interests and close inter-connection with the landed class, but also by the fear that the agrarian revolution would release social forces, would sweep away their own class privileges and the whole basis of capitalist property ownership and exploitation." In fact, Mr. Palme Dutt got so worked up against the Congress leadership that he charged it of acting "as a channel of imperialist influence." He observed: "We have seen the vacillating role of the Indian bourgeoisie, which is in profound conflict with the British bourgeoisie, which looks to the future of India as an independent nation and has played a powerful, even dominant, part in the national movement; yet at the same time, in fear at each advance of the mass struggle, has again and again acted as a brake on the national movement and reached its temporary bargains with imperialism."

Rise Of Socialist Tendencies In The National Movement

We would like it to be borne in mind that in this discussion, we are not concerned with parties and politics as such, but with the trends which appeared in the national movement and became powerful. The Communists, though possessed of a well-laid revolutionary programme of extremism, based upon their appraisal of the role of different classes in Indian society, never became very powerful in the national movement in pre-Independence India. They, nevertheless, were successful in generating interest among the intellectual classes and the national ranks in socialism and the Soviet Union. Socialist literature study groups were formed in different cities. One such group was formed in Bombay in 1924, and the late Vithalbhai J. Patel was one of its patrons. Jawaharlal Nehru visited the Soviet Union in 1927, and his writings and pronouncements after his return popularised socialist ideas. During the years 1927-1929, Shri Nehru and Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, in fact, headed a great Naujawan Bharat Sabha movement, about which Netaji has said in his book *The Indian Struggle*: "There is no doubt that the Sabha developed a frankly socialistic tendency."[1] Referring to his activities during this period, Nehru says in his *Autobiography* : "I wanted to spread the ideology of socialism, especially among Congress workers and the intelligentsia."

Formation Of The Congress Socialist Party Based On Marxism And Class Struggle

In subsequent years, after the Civil Disobedience movements of 1930-31, and 1932, there grew up a marked dissatisfaction in national ranks against Gandhian techniques of conducting the movement and his emphasis on non-violence. There was intense introspection and heart-searching within the ranks of the nationalist movement, and this new socialistic consciousness expressed itself by the formation of the Congress Socialist Party in May 1934 in Patna under the Chairmanship of Acharya Narendra Deo. This new Party took its stand on principles of revolutionary socialism and class war. One of the founders, ideologists and foremost leaders of this Party, Shri Jai Prakash Narain, wrote in the *Congress Socialist* (the weekly organ of the Congress Socialist Party) in 1935, a series of articles entitled "Fifty Years". Shri Narain was also the General Secretary of the Party, and special importance attaches to his pronouncements. He listed the following handicaps of the national leadership:

(1) Its incapacity for any class action against imperialism;

(2) Its incapacity for leading the middle classes to revolutionary action.

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[1] Shri Nehru also says : "The Workers' trade union movement was ideologically definitely socialist, and so were the majority of the Youth leagues. A vague confused socialism was already part of the atmosphere in India when I returned from Europe in December 1927, and even earlier than that there were many independent socialists. This tendency was strengthened in India, as in Europe and America, by developments in the Soviet Union and particularly the Five-Year Plan." **(Autobiography).**

He said that both these incapacities were demonstrated during the Civil Disobedience Movements, and observed: "If the leadership is not in a position to take class action against imperialism, it cannot naturally lead the other classes into action." He warned against "mere futile sentimentalism, mere wooden worship," and pleaded for "restless questioning, ruthless evaluation and a bold leap ahead." One year later, in 1936, at its Merrut Conference, the Party adopted Marxism as its guide to action and accepted the dictatorship of the proletariat as the means to establish socialism in India.[1]

Netaji Bose Propounds A New Party Programme In 1933

The suspension of the second Civil Disobedience Movement by Gandhiji in May 1933, when he was released and went on a three weeks' fast for self-purification, caused dissatisfaction among many top-ranking figures in the national movement. The late Vithalbhai J. Patel and Netaji Subhas Bose, who were convalescing at Vienna, issued a manifesto strongly criticising this decision and called for "a more radical policy and leadership." Netaji Bose advocated the formation of a new full-fledged Party with a clear ideology, programme and plan of action. He also gave an outline of the programme of such a Party. The following are some of its main points :

1. The Party will stand for the interest of the masses, that is, of the peasants, workers, etc., and not for the vested interests, that is, the landlords, capitalists and money-lending classes.

2. It will stand for the complete political and economic liberation of the Indian people.

3. It will believe in a sound system of state-planning for the reorganisation of the agricultural and industrial life of the country.

4. It will seek to build up a new social structure on the basis of the village communities of the past, that were ruled by the village "Panch" and will strive to break down existing social barriers like caste.

5. It will seek to establish a new monetary and credit system in the light of the theories and experiments that have been and are current in the modern world.

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[1] The Statement on Party's Nature, Tasks and Programme, adopted by the Meerut Conference on January 20, 1936, said : "The immediate task before us is to develop the national movement into a real anti-imperialist movement—a movement aiming at freedom from foreign power and the native system of exploitation. For this it is necessary to wean the anti-imperialist elements in the Congress away from its present bourgeois leadership and to bring them under the leadership of revolutionary socialism. This task can be accomplished only if there is within the Congress an organised body of Marxian socialists." And further : "It follows that the Party's own programme must be a Marxist one; otherwise the Party will fail to fulfil its task and leadership. Marxism alone can guide the anti-imperialist forces to their ultimate victory. Party members must, therefore, fully understand the technique of revolution, the theory and practice of class struggle, the nature of the State and the processes leading to the socialist society."

6. It will seek to abolish landlordism and introduce a uniform land-tenure system for the whole of India.

Congress Stand On Private Property And Class War In 1934

In the middle of 1934, "in view of the loose talk about the confiscation of private property and necessity of class war," the Congress Working Committee thought it necessary to clarify its stand. Meeting under Dr. Rajendra Prasad, then President of the Indian National Congress, the Working Committee reminded Congressmen that the Karachi Resolution on Fundamental Rights "neither contemplates confiscation of private property without just cause or compensation, nor advocacy of class war. The Working Committee is further of the opinion that confiscation and class war are contrary to the Congress creed of non-violence."

Jai Prakash Narain And Other Leftists Attack Gandhism And Congress

The left forces, however, continued to grow and subjected Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress leadership to severe criticism. In a pamphlet entitled *Why Socialism,* published in 1935-36, which became very popular and was widely read, Shri Jai Prakash Narain observed: "Gandhiji's Views are essentially what in socialist history is known as reformism. Its language is Indian but its substance is international. The chief interest of reformism lies in maintaining the established order of society. Reforming is intended not in securing social justice but in covering up the ugly fissures of society." Mr. Achyut Patwardhan, another prominent Congress Socialist leader, wrote in his Party organ, *The Congress Socialist,* in 1939 that Gandhiji rejects "the abolition of private property," and that the Gandhians "avoid a recognition of the reality of the class struggle and the necessity of taking up a decisive stand with the exploited against the exploiters." Mr. Patwardhan further observed: "Neutrality in class conflicts often makes the Gandhians throw their weight on the wrong side."

Another recognised and respected champion of the Kisan cause in India, the late Swami Sahjanand Saraswati, the first President of the All India Kisan Sabha and famous Bihar leader, thus satirically expressed his reaction against Gandhiji's policy of non-violence in his book in Hindi *Kranti aur Sanyukt Morcha* (Revolution and the United Front): "Neither a mass struggle nor a united front is possible till Gandhiji is the leader. In the evening of his life he cannot part with his dearest thing—non-violence. In fact, one might think that he does not want freedom, he wants only non-violence. His main object is non-violence, etc. . . ."

The Formation Of The All-India Kisan Sabha: Late Swami Sahjanand's Lead

In 1935, following the policy of United Front laid down by the VIIth World Congress of the Communist International to meet the rising menace of fascism, the Indian Communists, who till then had kept away from the national movement, denouncing it as reformist and capitulatory, decided to work in cooperation with the National Congress. This move strengthened the forces standing for class war and leftist policies. And in April 1936, on the occasion of the Lucknow Congress, an important step was taken towards organising and conducting the peasant movement and struggles on the basis of class struggle. Under the Presidentship of Swami Sahjanand Saraswati, the first All India Kisan Sabha was set up.

The Lucknow Session of the All India Kisan Sabha thus defined the object and the main task of the Kisan movement: "The object of the Kisan movement is to secure complete freedom from economic exploitation and the achievement of full economic and political power for the peasants and all other exploited classes. The main task of the Kisan movement shall be the organisation of peasants to fight for their immediate political and economic demands in order to prepare them for their emancipation from every form of exploitation. The Kisan movement stands for the achievement of ultimate economic and political power for the producing masses through its active participation in the national struggle for winning complete independence."

The Sabha issued a manifesto, which, among other things, declared: "The kisans all over the country are becoming more and more conscious, politically and economically, of their basic problem. The All India Kisan Sabha is an expression of this awakening among the peasantry. They have at last realised that they must fashion out their own militant class organisations if they are to make any substantial advance towards their goal.....It represents and speaks and fights for all those who live by the cultivation of the soil. All the different strata among the kisans will have to combine and fight for the removal of all fetters imposed by British Imperialism and its allies, the landlords."

Second Session Of The A. I. K. S. At Faizpur

This first session of the All India Kisan Sabha (A.I.K.S.) formulated a Charter of Kisan Demands which, in effect, was a full-throated programme of agrarian revolution. It, among others, demanded the abolition of the zamindari system without compensation. The second session of the A.I.K.S. was held at Faizpur in December 1936, alongwith the annual session of the Indian National Congress, under the presidentship of Prof. N. G. Ranga. He referred in his address to the "limitless and heartless persecution" of the kisans by "the zamindars and their lakhs of unscrupulous functionaries." He demanded that this "growing persecution" and "criminal drain and waste," must be stopped by ending the system. He hailed "the growing number of courageous comrades and the progressively growing class consciousness of the majority of our kisans." He said: "Our movement has the great advantage over our enemies of being able to generate and engender the class consciousness of the masses which can and will triumph over the armed battalions of our enemies." He said that their task was to fight British imperialism and Indian feudalism and so "we have to organise ourselves so intensively, so class consciously and so determinedly as to be able to carry on our double-sided struggle to a successful end." The Faizpur Session of the A.I.K.S. reiterated the Charter of Kisan Demands after which Swami Sahjanand Saraswati, now the Sabha's General Secretary, issued a long list of instructions to the Kisan workers of the country with a view to helping them to organise "the kisans in their daily struggles against economic exploitation and political oppression." He said that "the fundamental and minimum demands of the peasantry," according to the Faizpur decisions of the A.I.K.S., "could best be achieved by advancing day-to-day struggle of the kisans through the medium of their class organisations." Another prominent leader of the Kisan Sabha, Shri Indulal Yajnik, in his writings of the times strongly advocated the organisation of class struggles of the peasantry with a view to ending all exploitation.

Kisan Sabha Adopts The Red Flag

Soon after, in July 1937, at its meeting at village Niyamatpur in district Gaya, the All India Kisan Committee adopted the Red flag as its flag. It would appear that an increasing number of Provincial and District units of the Sabha had adopted the Red flag as their flag, and the All India body welcomed "this spontaneous expression of the class solidarity of our peasantry with our workers through this great symbol", and directed that the peasants "stand firm by the Red flag and hoist it at all their peasant gatherings and ceremonies."[1] This new Kisan movement, which for the first time in Indian history had an all-India character, gained great momentum soon after its birth, and in some provinces, notably in Bihar, under the leadership of the late Swami Sahjanand Saraswati, it came to wield great influence[1] over the peasant masses and actually came in conflict with the Congress Ministries, which were then in office under the Government of India Act of 1935. Huge kisan marches, comprising lakhs of kisans, were organised in front of the Government Secretariat at Patna, Lucknow, etc. Innumerable kisan struggles and strikes for some immediate demands were fought all over the country. It was a new type of peasant awakening the like of which had never been witnessed before. Almost all its leaders at the All-India and the Provincial levels were Congressmen, and the question of indiscipline within the organisation naturally cropped up. The question, indeed, exercised the mind of Mahatma Gandhi, who criticised this trend towards violent solutions of problems in the columns of the *Harijan*. The Congress Working Committee also had to pass certain resolutions on the subject and Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, President of the consecutive Lucknow and Faizpur Sessions of the Indian National Congress, issued a number of statements defining the relationships between this new Kisan Sabha trend and the Congress.

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[1] In a long statement issued on the subject, the Niyamatpur A.I.K.C. said: "The Red flag which has come to be recognised all the world over as the symbol of international solidarity and unity of the proletariat and the peasantry, has now come to endear itself not only to the industrial workers but also to the growing number of class-conscious, oppressed peasantry of India. Moreover, in all the countries all the exploited classes have today come to attach special significance in their struggle against the fascist menace to this great emblem of revolt against all systems of exploitation and oppression....All lovers of freedom and rebels against oppression of man by man will, we hope, realise the great contribution the adoption of this Red flag can make to the growth of and strengthening of the desired class consciousness, international outlook and militant anti-imperialist fervour of our masses."

The IIIrd (Comilla) Session Of The A.I.K.S.

Meeting at Calcutta in October 1937, the All India Kisan Committee issued an angry rejoinder against some elements within the Congress who were advocating the abolition of zamindari with compensation. In many subsequent meetings and conferences the All India Kisan Committee and Sabha reiterated the firm demand for the abolition of landlordism without compensation, declared its firm faith in the doctrine of class struggle and agrarian revolution and denounced the "class collaborationist" tendencies of Gandhi Seva Sangh and some top-most Congress leaders, including Mahatma Gandhi. The third Session of the A.I.K.S. was held at Comilla, East Bengal, in 1938, Swami Sahjanand again presiding, and by April 1939, when the fourth Session of the Sabha met at Gaya under the presidentship of Acharya Narendra Deo, its membership had reached the figure of eight lakhs. With this membership, and with the huge rally of over 3 lakh peasants at the Open Session of the Sabha at Gaya, the A.I.K.S. was recognised as the organisation next in influence to the Indian National Congress.

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[1] Determined kisan battles for the redress of some immediate grievances of the peasants were fought in almost all the provinces of India. Besides the Bihar *bakasht* land *satyagraha*, mention may be made of the Kisan Morcha in Punjab, the struggle of the Haris in Sind, the Ghalladher *satyagraha* in N.W.F.P., the Kisan *satyagrahas* in various parts of Kistna district in Andhra, the struggle of the poor peasants in Gujerat, the zamindars-kisan quarrels over *Sir* lands in U.P., etc.

World War II: The 1942 Quit India Movement

After the Second World War started, composed as the A.I.K.S. was of different parties and groups, each of whom followed different approaches and policies towards it, the Sabha's unity was soon broken up. The fifth Session of the Sabha met at Palassa (Andhra) in April 1940, under the presidentship of Rahula Sankrityayana. The Communists, who from the very beginning had taken a leading part in the formulation of Sabha policies and its organisation, had by now become dominant in the A.I.K.S. With the German attack upon the Soviet Union, the Communist policy towards War changed from one of hostility to support, and this resulted in a final split in the organisation at its VIth Session at Bihta in 1941.

We are, however, not concerned with these details. What we seek to point out is that the protagonists of class war and a revolutionary solution of the land question became a persistent and powerful force within the national movement. Mahatma Gandhi, and the Congress, however, always took a well-defined, determined and decisive stand against these trends, on account of which, in the cataclysmic years that followed leading to India's independence in 1947, the national movement, by and large, remained within peaceful channels and away from bloody conflicts, and ultimately succeeded in wresting power from unwilling alien hands.

Socialist Leaders Advocate Resort To Arms

This is not to say, however, that forces which did not basically subscribe to the Congress creed lay completely dormant in the pre-Independence years. Under the 'Quit India' and 'Do or Die' call of Mahatma Gandhi in August 1942, India's fight for freedom and the bravery of its masses reached unprecedented heights. This great upsurge was most intense in Western Bihar and Eastern U.P., areas where the Kisan movement during pre-war years had become most militant under the influence of militant Kisan Sabhas. The August 1942 upsurge was soon suppressed by the British with an iron hand, but a group of Congressmen and Socialists, under the leadership of Shri Jai Prakash Narain who had escaped from the Hazaribagh Jail, attempted to carry on the movement under their own slogans and specific forms of struggle. During his underground period, Jai Prakash issued a number of "Letters to All Fighters for Freedom". In the Third Letter he advocated the "simultaneous building up of units of free government in both town and country and protection of these from attack." The pattern of struggle envisaged by Jai Prakash included "a total industrial strike", and "the taking over of zamindari lands by peasants." Shri Jai Prakash, in fact, advocated resort to arms to fight the British.[1]

The Congress leadership, soon after it was released from Ahmednagar Fort in June 1945, through a resolution of the Congress Working Committee, disapproved of the dislocation, secrecy, and the general spirit of violence that was seen in the country following the 'Quit India' cry of 1942. To these Shrimati Aruna Asaf Ali and Shri Achyut Patwardhan, both leaders of the violent phase, and till then in hiding, issued a rejoinder. They said, "With regard to non-violence, Congress policy has been mainly pragmatic. From time to time it has defined its scope within limits of practicability. ....Conditions of unprovoked military and police aggression, however, create situations which are by no means easy to cope with. The resister has often only two alternatives : To resist with all his might in whatever manner seems practicable or to submit under the severest test......"[2]

The Violent Atmosphere After World War II

The atmosphere in the country was surcharged. Things had reached the boiling point. Stories about the heroic and courageous fight of the Indian National Army on India's eastern borders against British armed forces under the leadership of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose became well-known in India in 1945 and 1946 and added strength to the prevalent atmosphere to take up arms against the British oppressors. The people were impatient. As Shri Nehru said in a pronouncement, India had then became "a simmering volcano of 400 million human beings."[3] This mass impatience led to violent conflicts with British authorities in various parts of the country, in Delhi, Lahore, Calcutta, etc., and in the famous Mutiny of the Royal Indian Navy.

Indeed, it appeared as though nothing will prevent a bloodbath in India of an unprecedented magnitude. In spite of these ripe pre-conditions, however, if India avoided a violent revolution, the reason is not far to seek. It was the influence of the Congress and Mahatma Gandhi. The greatness of the Congress lies in the fact that it was built brick by brick by men with indomitable faith in their mission. They very naturally wanted everybody, irrespective of caste or creed, to share their ideology and to join in the task of building up a powerful anti-imperialist front. Their programme was to bring about a peaceful political revolution to be followed by a socio-economic revolution. And in all this Mahatma Gandhi led the Congress with peace and non-violence as his sheet anchor. Very rightly did the late Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel declare at a public meeting at Ahmedabad on January 14, 1946: [1] "Some say that Pandit Nehru was making fiery speeches, stirring up revolution and suggest that he should be arrested. They do not understand why there was no revolution in the country long ago. Mahatma Gandhi is responsible for it. He has done the work of the police. Even then he has often been put in jail."

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[1] This is what, for example, he said in his First Letter : "My own interpretation of the Congress position is clear and definite. Congress is prepared to fight aggression violently if the country became independent. Well, we have declared ourselves independent, and also named British as an aggressive power. We are, therefore, justified within the terms of the Bombay resolution itself to fight the British with arms." And again : "As far as I am concerned, I feel that I should be completely justified as an honest Congressman, without in any manner intruding my socialism upon the question, in repelling the British aggression with arms."

[2] **Amrit Bazar Patrika,** Allahabad Edition, 19-1-1946.

[3] Speech at Bombay on February 27, 1946 (**Leader,** 28.2.1946).

Mahatma Gandhi On Marx

And so at this critical juncture again Mahatma Gandhi intervened powerfully to restrain forces of violence. On January 2, 1946, in the course of his tour of Midnapur district in West Bengal, Gandhiji was asked some pointed questions in a meeting of about 500 Congress workers. Shri Pyarelal has recorded :[2] "Gandhiji was asked about Karl Marx. He got the opportunity and privilege of reading *Capital,* he told them, while he was in detention. He entertained great regard for his industry and acumen. But he could not believe in his conclusion. He had no faith in violence being able to usher in non-violence. The world thought was moving and outdating Karl Marx." In the second week of the same month was published Mahatma Gandhi's pamphlet *Constructive Programme : Its Meaning and Place.* It was a thoroughly revised edition of the one which Mahatmaji wrote in 1941. After referring to the need for Economic Equality,[3] he said: "I adhere to my doctrine of trusteeship in spite of the ridicule that has been poured upon it. It is true that it is difficult to reach. So is non-violence. But we made up our minds in 1920 to negotiate the deep ascent. We have found it worth the effort. Congressmen....should ask themselves how the existing inequalities can be abolished, violently or non-violently. I think we know the violent way. It has not succeeded anywhere."

Gandhiji On The Bankruptcy Of Violence

Of tremendous significance, however, was his call to the nation when the R.I.N. Mutiny broke out in February 1946. Writing in the *Harijan* of 23 February, 1946, he declared: "Hatred is in the air and impatient lovers of the country will gladly take advantage of it, if they can, through violence to further the cause of independence. I suggest that it is wrong at any time and anywhere. But it is more wrong and unbecoming in a country where fighters for freedom have declared to the world that their policy is truth and non-violence." He added: "The recent War whose embers have yet hardly died loudly proclaims bankruptcy of this use of hatred. And it remains to be seen whether the so-called victors have really won or whether they have not depressed themselves in seeking and trying to depress their enemies. It is a bad game at its best." Making a powerful plea for non-violence, he said : "Many have preached non-violence through the lips while harbouring violence in heart. Hypocrisy has acted as an ode to virtue but it could never take its place. And so I plead for non-violence and yet more non-violence. I do so not without knowledge but with 60 years' experience behind me. . . ."

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[1] Amrit Bazar Patrika, Allahabad Edition, 16-1-1946.

[2] Amrit Bazar Patrika, Allahabad Edition, 5-1-1946.

[3] See quotation at beginning of this Chapter.

Non-Violent Revolution Not A Programme Of Seizure Of Power But Of Transformation

In the same issue of the *Harijan,* Mahatmaji replied to those who began to draw parallels between the R.I.N. Mutiny and the revolt of the sailors of Petrograd which preceded the Russian Revolution. His views were expressed in a discussion with the workers of Midnapore on "Non-violent Technique and Parallel Government," which was summarised by Shri Pyarelal. Mahatma Gandhi said : "Let nobody be misled by the Russian parallel. Our tradition is wholly different from Russia's. The historical setting too is different. In Russia the whole population was under arms; Indian masses won't take to arms even if they could be given the necessary training. . . . ." And this is how he described the essence of non-violent transformation : "A non-violent revolution is not a programme of 'seizure of power'. It is a programme of transformation of relationships ending in a peaceful transfer of power."

Violence In The Countryside

The great influence of Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress leadership and organisation succeeded in preventing a blood-bath in India, but the trend nevertheless persisted. While on the one hand there was a general tendency in the country to depart from Mahatma Gandhi's path of non-violence, to which the socialist leaders added weight through their utterances, there was, on the other hand, a discernible, growing tendency among the rural masses to rise against their immediate oppressors. There was visible among the peasantry a growing restlessness which took the form of violent and deadly clashes between the zamindars and kisans every now and then. The peasants increasingly began to resist evictions and *begar*. The zamindars, having wealth and power, started to organise themselves and to resist[1] the plans for zamindari abolition of Congress Ministries which had come to power after the 1946 General Elections. The forces of revolutionary socialism made full use of the situation and under the hammer and sickle flag, thousands of peasants were organised to forcibly sow or reap the fields which they claimed belonged to them, and from which the zamindars were forcibly evicting them.

Indeed, things seemed to be heading towards a show-down. For a time it appeared as though nothing will stop a bloody and violent conflict in the countryside. In the months preceding India's Independence on August 15, 1947, and in the period following it, the entire countryside in India witnessed ceaseless agrarian conflicts. To complete the picture we would give a brief account of the situation in Uttar Pradesh.

Agrarian Violence In U. P. During 1947-49

Agrarian riots became marked in U.P. in early 1947. A party of zamindars attacked the residents of village Hamirpur in district Sultanpur, destroying the crops and looting the houses.[2] A few months after one person was killed and five others received injuries when a party of men headed by a zamindar attacked the peasants of village Kaima in the same district.[3] A few days earlier, the same paper has reported, parties of kisans and zamindars clashed over an agrarian dispute in village Bamori in Jhansi district, resulting in the death of two zamindars and injuries to half a dozen persons.[4] Such clashes continued through 1948, and, it would appear, assumed serious proportions in 1949. In March 1949, an armed mob led by zamindars attacked kisans in village Shahpur in district Ballia, as a result of which one Socialist worker was reported killed, many injured, of which two were removed to the hospital in a serious condition. In village Shahwazpur in Ghazipur district, a mob of 2,000 attempted to rescue from a police party some "women members of the Communist Party for allegedly instigating villagers against a zamindar," and was fired upon by the police. This was in July. In August, 40 zamindars armed with lathis attacked a meeting of kisans at village Rampur in Ballia. The Secretary of the District Socialist Party was injured. Another worker of the Party "was caught hold of by the zamindars when he lay wounded, who dragged him about. When he began to show signs of collapse they threw him away at some place outside the village. After this orgy of violence the zamindars looted the house of tenants of the village."[1] There was trouble again at Tahirpur village in Ballia on September 8, leading to firing by the police resulting in one death and some injuries.

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[1] Shri Salig Ram Jayaswal, M.L.A., and Secretary, Allahabad District Congress Committee, said in a statement: "...The zamindars of these provinces are preparing to oppose zamindari abolition with the force of arms." (**Amrit Bazar Patrika,** Allahabad, 1.5.47).

[2] **National Herald,** 13.1.1947.

[3] **National Herald,** 19.6.47.

[4] **National Herald,** 16.6.47.

The eastern districts of U.P. were not the only areas of agrarian trouble. In April 1949, a deputation of peasants from village Bahroli waited on the Chief Minister, Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, soon after which, on April 13, the zamindars attacked the *chamars* of the village, burning their houses, etc. The *National Herald* (of 4.5.49) reported a serious clash between kisans and landlords in village Amauli Kalan of district Barabanki. Towards the end of May there was trouble in village Johawanakati in district Rae Bareilly leading to police firing and three deaths. There was an agrarian riot in village Bishanpur in Malihabad sub-division of district Lucknow, following which a zamindar and 12 of his supporters were arrested.[2] A week later there was an agrarian dispute in village Mastamall in Goshaiganj police circle of the same district resulting in one death and many injuries. The Press Trust of India reported from Banaras on June 27, 1949, the death of 8 persons and injuries to many in a clash between agricultural labourers and a party of zamindars on June 24, on the border of Mirzapur and Banaras districts. The trouble broke out when labourers refused to carry manure to the zamindars' land. Another serious agrarian riot was reported from Tanda in Faizabad district in which 2 men were killed and 8 injured seriously in a *lathi* fight between zamindars' men and tenants over the cultivation of paddy field.[3] No wonder, therefore, that a spokesman of U.P. Government said at Lucknow on August 4, 1949 : "Agrarian riots in the rural areas of U.P. have shown an upward trend as a result of the increasing class consciousness among tenants and zamindars." He disclosed that the total number of riots upto July 15, 1949, was 2,057; for the corresponding period last year the figure was 1,878. A majority of them were attributed to property feuds and quarrels over possession of land. The spokesman said : "Though crime against person has decreased, crime against property has shown an upward trend."[4]

Zamindari Abolition Averts Class Violence

It is clear from the foregoing that violence was in the air in post-Independence years in our countryside. The atmosphere was tense and the rural society had the germs within it which could lead to a bloody consummation. The incorporation of the demand for the abolition of the intermediary system in the Congress Election Manifesto of 1946, and the decision of the U.P. Assembly, on August 8, 1947, to abolish the zamindari system, contributed largely to pacify the simmering volcano that the countryside had become. Thakur Hukum Singh, then U.P.'s Revenue Minister, very rightly told Pressmen at Jhansi on December 10, 1946: "If the U.P. Government had not taken this drastic and revolutionary step, the politically and class conscious peasantry would have risen in revolt and whole of the province would have been in the grip of a great conflict."

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[1] National Herald, 27.8.'49

[2] National Herald, 4.8.'49.

[3] National Herald, 17.10.'49.

[4] Statesman, New Delhi Edition, 5.8.'49.

The All India Kisan Sabha In Post-Independence Years

In subsequent years this policy of abolition of peasant exploitation by the landed classes was extended to other States. This, along with other socio-economic policies of the Congress and its Governments, have very largely contributed to the development of India on peaceful lines. The other trend, however, still persists. After the A.I.K.S. was split at Bihta in 1941, the different left groups never succeeded in uniting again in one organisation. In post-Independence years the Socialists organised their Hind Kisan Panchayat. The Revolutionary Socialist Party and other left groups constituted a United Kisan Sabha under the presidentship of the veteran revolutionary Shri Jogesh Chandra Chatterji. None of these organisations, however, have succeeded in making any headway. The parent body, the All India Kisan Sabha, under Communist influence, has gone from strength to strength in post-Independence years. Some of the biggest organised Kisan struggles were fought under its leadership between 1946 and 1950. Mention may be made of the struggle of the Worlis in Maharashtra during 1946-47. In Bengal the *Tebhaga* Movement (that is, struggle for reduction of landlord's share of the produce from half to one-third) developed in most of the districts and succeeded in getting an assurance from the Government that it accepted the *Tebhaga* principle. In Andhra, throughout the zamindari areas, peasants began to occupy lands from which they had been removed and there were no rent-campaigns in many estates. In Travancore, the peasants and agricultural workers, joined by demobilised army men, fought against the landed classes and there were armed clashes with the Maharajah's army, resulting in innumerable deaths. In Malabar also the Kisan Sangham became powerful and led many long drawn-out kisan struggles.

The most violent and bitter of these peasant struggles were waged in Telengana, Tripura and Manipur. The peasant armed struggle in Telengana took the form of guerilla action against the Razakars, and later against the forces of the Indian Union. A parallel government was established in about 2,500 villages and according to Communist claims, 10,00,000 acres of land were seized from the landed classes and distributed among the agricultural labourers and poor peasants. A regular guerilla fighting unit was organised and when routed in the plains, they retired to the hills and forests and continued so till September 1951, when the violent movement was finally withdrawn. No exact figures are known of the total casualty in the Telengana area, but the death roll is supposed to be near about three to four thousand.

It is thus apparent that this Kisan Sabha movement, based upon class struggle, and led by Communists, is a force which cannot be ignored. What is important is to note that it is an organised effort. The VIIth Session of the A.I.K.S. was held at Bhakna Kalan in district Amritsar, Punjab, in 1943, presided over by Shri Bankim Mukherji. The VIIIth Session met at Bezwada in 1944 under the presidentship of Swami Sahjanand Saraswati. The IXth Session met at Netrakona, district Mymensingh, in 1945, under the presidentship of the veteran Communist Muzaffar Ahmad. In 1947, the Xth Session met at Sikandara Rao, district Aligarh (U.P.), under the presidentship of Shri Karyanand Sharma of Bihar. The XIth and XIIth Sessions met at Cannanore and Moga respectively, in 1953 and 1954, under the presidentship of Shri Indulal Yajnik. And the XIIIth Session met at Dahanu in 1955 under Shri Nana Patil. Today the A.I.K.S. has 23 provincial units, and a total membership of 12,00,000.

Communist Land Policy In Recent Years

The Cannanore (XIth) Session of the A.I.K.S. adopted a Policy Statement, which, among other things, called for an intensification of peasant struggles against evictions, against new taxes, for rent and revenue reduction, etc. Writing in *For a Lasting Peace, For a People's Democracy,*[1] the Cominform journal, after this Session, Shri E. M. S. Namboodripad, sometime acting General Secretary of the C.P.I. and a member of its Political Bureau, and the leading Kisan ideologist of the Party, claimed that the "heroic struggles" of Tripura, Telengana, Andhra, Tamilnad, Malabar, etc., resulted in the emergence of "the United Democratic Front with the Communist Party as its leading force," which was "a serious alternative to the Congress in the first General Elections held in India under the new

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[1] No. 51 (267), dated December 18, 1953; See article heading, "Present Stage of Peasant Movement in India."

Constitution."[1] Shri Namboodripad traces "the main battle cry" of the Indian peasant movement—"abolition of landlordism of all types"—to "the impact of the Great October Socialist Revolution." And he says that while the Indian peasantry has more and more realised "the key importance of basic transformations in land relations, the ruling classes and their ideologists have done their best to distort the real character of the agrarian question and its solution." He then goes on to ridicule the Government and Congress Programmes of land reforms and Acharya Vinoba Bhave's *Bhoodan* movement as examples of such distortion. He accuses the Socialist Party of actively supporting Congress land reforms. Namboodripad then calls upon Indian Kisan Sabhaites to learn their lessons from Russian and Chinese Revolutions, for on them "responsibility lies for carrying on the daily practical struggle to develop the organised strength of the peasantry," and to transform "the present mighty peasant upsurge into an organised movement with tens of thousands of Village Peasant Committees enjoying the confidence of the millions of peasants."[2]

Shri N. Prasad Rao, General Secretary of the A.I.K.S., in the Report which he presented to the XIIth Session at Moga on September 16, 1954, talked in the same strain.[3] He very strongly attacked the Congress Governments at the Centre, and in the States. He said that they had "failed" to carry out any fundamental reform such as abolition of landlordism and "imperialist loot." Referring to tenancy laws and zamindari and jagir acquisition Acts, Prasad Rao said that while some of the provisions of these laws, such as fixation of maximum rents, had provided limited relief, in their totality these laws had become the "instruments in the hands of the landlords to launch a big offensive against the tenants." He alleged that the new taxation measures were a heavy burden on the meagre incomes of rural masses, and the price policies were measured to suit the "convenience and benefits of the imperialists and Indian monopolists." He felt that "the biggest opportunity" to unite all sections of the rural toilers had arisen, and it was for the kisan movement to take advantage of it and unite all sections "in the struggle for land." At the mass rally of about a lakh peasants at Moga, Shri P. Sundarayya, the chief leader of the Telangana movement, advised the kisans not to give up lands they were cultivating, even if the worst type of suppression was let loose on them.[1] He recounted the history of the peasant struggle in India and declared that the legislation on abolition of landlordism had proved a farce and that in the name of these legislations repression and tyranny of the worst type had been let loose. Sundarayya veh mently castigated the treatment meted out to peasants "since the dawn of so-called independence," and said : "If you wish to stop the imposition of new taxes every day, if you wish land to be transferred to the tillers, if you wish to do away with restrictions on civil liberties, if you wish to raise your standard of living and make India a strong country, then, comrades, be united and throw away this Congress rule."

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[1] Shri Namboodripad refers to the "process of rapid radicalisation that took place among the peasant masses during the years of the Second World War and after." "After the 'Transfer of Power' and the assumption of authority by the Congress," however, "this process was checked temporarily owing to the fact that many peasants still had faith in the Congress. But soon the peasants began to see that their expectation of an end to their difficulties was nothing but an empty illusion. They saw, as a matter of fact, that their sufferings and misery were growing instead of abating, and new ever-increasing sections of them began to come into the field of struggle."

[2] The following pattern for the development of peasant movement, laid down by Shri Namboodripad, would be found interesting : "While popularising the slogan of taking over landlord's land and giving it free to the tenants and landless labourers, we should also see that the broadest possible forms of action are developed around such demands as : security of tenure for tenant cultivators, reduction in agricultural commodities, supply of cheap consumption goods for the peasantry, abolition of all forms of serfdom and semi-serfdom, etc. We should realise that it is precisely to divert the mass of peasants from these real concrete demands that the ruling classes are raising the slogan of 'immediate' and 'basic' land reform, and then restricting it to the form of 'land gift,' 'fixation of an upper limit,' 'co-operative farming,' etc."

[3] National Herald, 17.9.'54.

Pandit Pant On The Essentials Of Peaceful Progress

We would not labour the point further. The existence of a continual and determined challenge to peaceful methods of social transformation followed by the Congress is patent and clear. The Congress leadership, however, has always been conscious of the fact that in order to ensure the success of their peaceful policies, the land sector will have to be given first consideration. Addressing a Press Conference at Lucknow in June 1949, when the comprehensive U.P. Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Bill was published U.P.'s Chief Minister, Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, said :[2] "China has been swallowed up by Communism and now many people talk about its advance in Asia. Communism cannot be warded off by repression. To ward it off, it is necessary to have a constructive programme. The Kuomintang is now paying for ignoring this aspect. It did not see the writing on the wall......Those who want peaceful progress of the country must realise that in order to save the country from Communism, the aspirations of the common man must be respected and should be realised as far as possible."

Two months later, addressing the Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee at Kanpur on August 28, 1949, Shri Jawaharlal Nehru said : "In China the Communists were winning. The land problem there was at the root of it. Nearly forty years ago the emperor was ousted. There was a revolution. During the forty years China was unable to evolve a land policy. The result was dissolution of the government. History showed that when a country solved the land problem, its difficulties decreased and other questions began to solve themselves."

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[1] **Hindustan Times, 21.9.'54.**

[2] **National Herald, 11.6.'49.**

It is this awareness of the Congress leadership which has resulted in land reform measures of varying types and effects in the different States of the Indian Union in post-Independence years. On occasions these reforms have been variously criticised as being not far-reaching enough, as being slow, etc. We are not concerned with a discussion of these reforms here, but the fact cannot be denied that in their totality, they have effected very important and significant changes in India's countryside, and the process is continuing. The National Planning Commission has given priority to land reforms, and currently a Land Reforms Panel, appointed by the Commission, is formulating a far-reaching, comprehensive programme of land reforms for the Second Plan Period.

Role Of Village Panchayats In Peaceful Revolution

It is in this context that the development of the Panchayat institution in India has to be viewed. The abolition of intermediaries has removed the most potent factor for disturbance of agrarian peace. Differences in the various livelihood classes of our agricultural population, nevertheless, continue and express itself in occasional mortal feuds. The Panchayat institution, inherent in the very blood of the Indian villager, handed down to him from immemorial centuries, holds out the prospect of becoming an effective regulator of these feuds, arousing their sense of a community, and lead them onwards through collective effort, towards greater and greater prosperity, fellow-feeling and the well-being of all. The proposition is often put forward that class interests are irreconcilable and must lead to class war and conflicts. The leadership in India is well aware of the existence of such class conflicts, but it does not believe in fomenting them so as to lead to bloodshed and mortal feuds. It believes in and follows a policy of equity and justice, in which the man who labours and produces has top consideration. The acceptance of the socialist goal by the Avadi Congress and the Union Parliament is an expression of this very policy. And since India lives in its villages, this policy has to be made real there. In this the land reforms are playing and will play a great role, but in actual implementation, in the ushering in of a new society in a peaceful revolution, in short, the Village Panchayats will have to play a major role and meet the challenge of violence, bloodshed and anarchy.

Nehru On Revolution And Violence

Addressing young men attending the A.I.C.C. Youth Camp at New Delhi in the last week of September, 1955, Shri Jawaharlal Nehru said:[1] "Revolution is not necessarily associated with violence. Young people and students should understand the true significance of revolution. A thing which was revolutionary at one time or at a particular place, may be counter-revolutionary in a different context. Revolution indicated a revolutionary change, social, economic and political. Gandhiji was the greatest revolutionary of the age inasmuch as he changed the entire outlook of the country and created the mighty force which ultimately led to the achievement of Independence through a unique technique of non-violence. So revolution does not necessarily mean a militant movement or use of violence."

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[1] See A.I.C.C. Economic Review, Vol. VII, No. 15, Whole No. 136, dated December 1, 1955; p. 4.

CHAPTER VIII

VILLAGE PANCHAYATS IN THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT

> *"All that is old is not necessarily good, and all that is new is not necessarily bad. The wise accept the good after due investigation and the fools accept what others say."* [1]
>
> —KALIDAS

> *"Villages are like women. In their keeping is the cradle of the race. It is the function of the village like that of woman to provide people with their elemental needs, with food and joy, with the simple poetry of life, and with those ceremonies of beauty which the village spontaneously produces and in which she finds delight. But when constant strain is put upon her through the extortionate claims of ambition; when her resources are exploited through the excessive stimulus of temptation, then she becomes poor in life and her mind becomes dull and uncreative. From the time-honoured position of the wedded partner of the city she is degraded to that of the maid-servant, while in its turn, the city in its intense egotism and pride remains unconscious of the devastation constantly worked upon the very source of its life, health and joy."* [2]
>
> —RABINDRANATH TAGORE

VILLAGE Panchayats featured for the first time in the annals of the Indian National Congress in 1909. In 1907-08, the entire subject of local self-government was considered by a Royal Commission on Decentralisation, after which the Secretary of State for India admitted that the local self-government scheme of 1882, propounded by the then Viceroy, Lord Ripon, had not been properly implemented. The 24th Session of the Congress, meeting at Lahore in December 1909, adopted the following resolution: "This Congress expresses its satisfaction that the Secretary of State has recognised that the Local Self-Government scheme of 1882 has not had a fair trial and has pressed on the Government of India the necessity of an effectual advance in the direction of making local, urban and rural bodies really self-governing and it expresses the earnest hope that the Government will be pleased to take early steps *to make all local bodies from Village Panchayats upwards*

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[1] पुराण मित्येवनसाधु सर्वं । न चापि नूनं नवमित्यवध्यम ।
सन्तः परीक्षान्यतरद्भजन्ते । मूढः परपत्ययेनबुद्धि ॥

[2] Quoted from **Rural Reconstruction, Principles and Methods** by Kuryenson.

elective with elected non-official chairman and to support them with adequate financial aid."

This same resolution was repeated at the Silver Jubilee (25th) Session of the Congress at Allahabad in December 1910, presided over by Sir William Wedderburn. Apparently high hopes were aroused. It is said in the Introduction to the Report of the Allahabad Congress: "These (i.e., the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Decentralisation—*author*) are engaging attention, and it is believed that the Government will, without much delay, announce the reforms which they have decided to carry out. An important feature of them will probably be the revival of Village Panchayats which are to be endowed with real power."[1]

It is apparent, however, that the dynamic perspective on Village Panchayats, their role in the regeneration of India, etc., had not till then developed. The reports of speeches on the Resolution at the Allahabad Congress have more in mind the affairs of municipal and district boards, and the references to Village Panchayats are only casual. No tangible results followed from the recommendations of the Decentralisation Commission, and the 28th Session of the Congress, meeting at Karachi in December 1913, adopted a resolution regretting "that the recommendations of the Decentralisation Commission, with regard to further development of local self-government, have not yet been given effect to," and urged early steps to increase the powers and resources of local bodies.

Mahatma Gandhi's First Reference To Panchayats In 1915

Mahatma Gandhi returned to India from South Africa (via Great Britain) in January 1915. India received him like a hero, and in this very first year he travelled widely all over the country and began to formulate his schemes for India as also his future programme. A year later, in 1916, he began to place his ideas before his countrymen. His speech on February 4 at Banaras, on the occasion of the opening of the Banaras Hindu University, created a flutter in the political field. And ten days later, on February 14 his speech at the Missionary Conference at Madras outlined his approach to Swadeshi movement. This important speech is probably the first indication of how his mind was working about Indian villages and what he thought of the ancient Panchayat system. Said Gandhiji: "Following out the Swadeshi spirit, I observe, the indigenous institutions and the Village Panchayats hold me. India is really a republican country, and it is because it is that that it has survived every shock hitherto delivered. Princes and potentates, whether they were Indian-born or foreigners, have hardly touched he vast mass except for collecting revenue. The latter in their urn seem to have rendered unto Caesar what was Caesar's and for the rest have done much as they have liked." Deploring the use of a foreign language for educational purposes, and tracing the consequent evils, and pointing out the good that may have resulted from he use of vernacular languages, he said: "The question of village sanitation, etc., would have been solved long ago. The Village Panchayats would be now a living force in a special way, and India would almost be enjoying self-government suited to its requirenents."[1]

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[1] Report of the Twenty-fifth Indian National Congress held at Allahabad on th 26th, 27th, 28th and 29th December, 1910; printed at Indian Press, Allahabad, 1911 Introduction, p. ii.

The Congress pronouncements on local self-government, including as it did the demand for elective Village Panchayats, and the hopes aroused by the Decentralisation Commission and the subsequent disappointment, together combined to revert public attention to the question of village communities, in the background of their ancient context, and possible role in the set-up of a future self-governing India. Dr. John Mathai's and Dr. Radha Kumud Mookerjee's valuable treatises[2] on the subject heightened public nterest in the subject in the latter part of the second decade of the century.

Dr. Annie Besant's Reference To Panchayats At Calcutta Congress, 1917

A major reference to Village Panchayats came in a Congress Presidential pronouncement in 1917. Presiding over the 32nd Session of the Indian National Congress at Calcutta in December 1917, Dr. Annie Besant made a powerful plea for Village Panchayats. Referring to the stirring of new national consciousness in the village, she said the raiyat "resents the rigid payment of tax in money instead of the variable tax in kind........ He resents the requent resettlements which force him to borrow from the moneyender to meet the higher claim. He wants the old Panchayat back gain; he wants that his village should be managed by himself and is fellows, and he wants to get rid of the tyranny of the petty fficials, who have replaced the old useful communal settlements." he said that "economic and moral deterioration can only be checked y the re-establishment of a healthy and interesting village life, nd this depends upon the re-establishment of the Panchayat as e Unit of Government."

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[1] Quoted from Tendulkar's **Mahatma**, Vol. I, pp. 227-8.

[2] Namely, **Village Government in British India**, and **Local Government in Ancient India**, referred to by us in previous chapters.

Mrs. Besant then strongly criticised the “inefficient bureaucracy” for its failure to do whatever little was suggested in th Report of the Decentralisation Commission published ten year earlier. She went on to point out the defects and drawbacks o the Report of this Commission and gave the following picture o Panchayat functions as she visualised them: “Village needs woul thus be made known, and if necessary they could be represente by the Panchayats to a higher authority. The village would become articulate through its Panchayat, and would no more be th dumb and often driven creature which it is today. And it woul be brought into touch with the larger life. The Panchayats migh invite lecturers, organise discussions, arrange amusements, games etc. All village life would be lifted to a higher level, widened an enriched by such organisation, and each village, further, formin one of a group of villages, would realise its unity with others, an thus become an organ of the larger corporate life.”

Chequered History Of British Attempts To Establish Panchayats

The Decentralisation Commission was in fact just one amon the many in the chequered history of British attempts to establis local self-governing institutions in India. A very lucid account o these early attempts would be found in Dr. Mathai's study.[1] Th British attempts, never sincere and genuine, were confined to testing the worth of these ancient bodies in the judicial field. As earl as 1802, attempts were made in Bombay Presidency to use Panchayats in the regular administration of justice by the Regulation o 1802, which was modified by a Regulation of 1827. The system entirely failed in actual working and was definitely abolished i 1861. Indeed, in these early years, we found some of the bes British Officers, the Mackenzies, Metcalfes and Maines, carrying o a great debate among themselves, and in official despatches, abou the place of village communities in Indian history, their merits an demerits, the wisdom or otherwise of saving them or reviving them etc. This discussion was, however, taking place when this ver gentry were the chief instruments of a policy and an administration which were together cruelly and heartlessly destroying thes bodies. And the history of these endless discussions, as also th chequered attempts made to lift up the prostrate village communities, is an object lesson in how not to proceed about the busines And so a brief discussion of this chequered history would be foun interesting and useful.

After the Bombay Presidency Regulation of 1802, the Villag Panchayat was incorporated by law in the ordinary judicial syste a few provinces in 1816. Under this Regulation of 1816, trial y Panchayat was permitted in Madras Presidency, if both the arties agreed to submit the dispute to the Panchayat. The Panayat was to be summoned then by the village headman. But in tual practice the Regulation failed to achieve any success. In e old system of things, the village headman, who used to be the ey figure, was always a man of the people and trusted by them. n the new set-up, the village headman increasingly came to be entified as a representative of the Government. He was given large owers in the constitution and conduct of Panchayats, and the llagers consequently were not impressed by the popular character the institution. In fact in these early, as in all subsequent tempts to create some type of a body at the village level, visualised serve some of the good purposes for which the age-old Panchaats functioned, the British rulers always remained obsessed with e idea of keeping all activities "under the control of the British thority," which obsession proved fatal for all the efforts made.

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[1] Village Government in British India, Op. cit., See Chapter VII, "Administratio of Justice," pp. 162-198.

Early Panchayat Legislations

A major pronouncement in favour of the village institution as made by the Famine Commission of 1880.[1] It recommended at such institutions be utilised for village relief work. In purance of this recommendation, the village agencies were called on to control famine, but in actual fact the attempt moved only e village headman, the accountant, and the watchman, who had the time been completely identified with the Governmental achine. In 1880-81, the Government of Lord Ripon issued a resotion on Provincial Finance wherein a wish was expressed that cal self-government should commence at levels lower than those District Boards but made no reference to the villages. Followg this, Local Self-Government Acts were put on the Statute Book Madras and Bengal Presidency in 1884 and 1885, respectively. e Madras Act laid down the following as the duties of Union nchayats:

(a) Lighting of public roads;
(b) Cleaning of public roads, drains, tanks and wells, etc.;

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[1] Said the Commission : "In most parts of India some village organisation exists, which offers a ready and natural, though still imperfect, machinery for coping with famine, and it is of special importance that whatever is possible should be done towards improving and strengthening this machinery where it is present, so that it may become more thoroughly efficient for purposes of village relief. For the progress of the country the encouragement of the principle of the Local Self-Government, by which business of all kinds should be left more and more to local direction, is of much moment, and nowhere so than in dealing with local distress; and however great be the difficulties in the way of its practical realisation, it will be well never to lose the opportunity of taking any step that may lead towards it." (Report, Part I, para 142).

(c) The establishment and maintenance of hospitals, dispensaries and schools;
(d) Making and repairing of public roads and drains;
(e) Supply of water for domestic purposes; and
(f) Preservation of public health.

The Bengal Act also entrusted to the village unions the management of Cattle pounds, and the control of registration of statistics. In Madras the Unions derived their income mainly from the proceeds of a light tax on houses. In Bengal the main source of income of the Unions was that accruing under the Cattle Trespass Act, and contributions from Local Government and District Board. The Boards which were entrusted with the administration of the Unions consisted of nominated members and headmen of villages, who were also Government agents. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that they scarcely got any response and remained inactive. In Madras Presidency, between 1889-90 and 1902-03, the number of Unions increased from 248 to 397, and their income from 3½ to nearly 7 lakhs of rupees. In 1902-03, the number of Unions in Bengal stood at 57. Such a fate was inevitable. The old Panchayats were informal affairs, not statutorily created but working on the basis of free will of the villagers. It met freely where and when it liked, was ignorant of the blessedness of odd numbers and decisions by majority, and was not accustomed to seeing its decisions annulled by a petition sent over the heads of its members. Apparently oblivious of these crying failures, and in their 'enthusiasm' to lead on 'natives' to self-rule, the British rulers continued to pass orders, rules, Acts, etc., for the development of self-governing institutions in the villages, but almost all of them remained for the most part on paper.[1]

The Royal Commission On Decentralisation (1907)

In 1896, and again in 1897, the Government of India adopted Resolutions on Local Self-Government, but these completely ignored the villages. In 1907-08, the entire subject of local self-government was considered by a Royal Commission on Decentralisation appointed by Edward VII. The Commission consisted of five Englishmen and an Indian, Romesh Chandra Dutt. The Commission recognised that "throughout the greater part of India the village constitutes the primary territorial unit of Government organisation, and from the villages are built up larger administrative entities."[1] These villages, said the Report, "formerly possessed a large degree of autonomy," but "this autonomy has now disappeared owing to the establishment of local civil and criminal courts, the present revenue and police organisation, the increase of communication, the growth of individualism, and the operation of the individual raiyatwari system which is extending even in the north of India. Nevertheless the village remains the first unit of administration, the principal village functionaries—the headman, the accountant and the village watchman—are largely utilised and paid by Government, and there is still a certain amount of common village feeling and interests."[2]

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[1] Thus, for example, Lord Dufferin's statement of sanitary policy in 1888 led to the passing of Village Sanitation Acts in Bombay and the Central Provinces. Village Sanitary Committees were created with the sole function of attending to village sanitation. In the year 1912, the number of such Committees was 286 in Bombay and 56 in Central Provinces! Similar was the fate of the attempt to constitute the village headman into a sort of a Civil Court by conferring some judicial powers upon him, e.g., the Madras Village Court Act of 1888

The Commission has recorded that some witnesses who appeared before it were of the view that village communities had disintegrated so much in India that they could not be reconstituted as reliable units of local self-government. A strong body of opinion, however, held the contrary view. Weighing both the opinions, the Commission recommended that it would be desirable to constitute Village Panchayats for the administration of local village affairs.[3] The Commission visualised certain difficulties in the success of such an effort, like caste and religious disputes and "factions so common in village life", or, in large estates the influence of the landlord which "may prevent free action by the tenantry." It, however, agreed that these difficulties are "far from insurmountable", but advised a gradual and cautious approach beginning from those villages "in which circumstances are most favourable by reason of homogeneity."

The Commission On Panchayat Functions

Recommending the individual village to be the ordinary unit of Panchayat administration, the Commission recommended the membership of five as "a good average", though local variations were permitted, and laid down that the village headman "should be *ex-officio* chairman of the Panchayat, as being *ex-hypothesi* the most influential person in the village." The Commission considered that the members of the village council (and of the Chairman where there is no recognised headman) should be informally elected by the village, under the supervision of Government officials.[1] No term of office was laid down for the Panchayats, but it was considered undesirable to make elections at all frequent. It was recommended that functions of Panchayats should be gradually and cautiously bestowed. The following functions for Panchayats were recommended :

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[1] Report of the Royal Commission upon Decentralisation in India, Vol. I. London, 1909; Para 694, p. 236.

[2] Ibid, para 696, p. 237.

[3] The Commission actually said : "We do not think it possible, even if it were expedient, to restore the ancient village system, under which the community was responsible for each of its members, and in turn claimed the right to regulate his actions; but we hold that it is most desirable, alike in the interests of decentralisation and in order to associate the people with the local tasks of administration, that an attempt should be made to constitute and develop Village Panchayats for the administration of local village affairs."

The Commission added : "We are of the opinion also that the foundation of any stable edifice which shall associate the people with the administration must be the village, as being an area of much greater antiquity than administrative creations such as tehsils and one in which people are known to one another and have interests which converge on definite and well-recognised objects like water supply and drainage. It is probable, indeed, that the scant success of the efforts hitherto made to introduce a system of rural self-government is largely due to the fact that we have not built upon from the bottom" (Para 699, p. 239).

(i) Civil and Criminal jurisdiction of petty cases[2];
(ii) Village sanitation and expenditure on certain minor works;
(iii) Construction and maintenance of school houses and some local control in respect to school management;
(iv) Selected Panchayats to be given the management of small fuel and fodder reserves;
(v) Management of village cattle pound and of markets of purely local importance.

As regards matters appertaining to revenue, agricultural loans, or the distribution of irrigation water, the Commission felt that they should not always remain outside the scope of Panchayat's duties. It thought that for the present the functions enumerated above would keep them fully engaged, and so these may be kept out of the scope of their functions. The Commission said that it is in possession of evidence to show that in some provinces village officers are under-paid and corrupt, and recommended that "the work of Panchayats should be free from interference by the lower government subordinates." "Men of this class have their own reasons for opposing any real local control."[3] It also recommended that Panchayats should not be placed under District or sub-District Boards. All matters relating to the appointment and removal of village officers should be dealt with by the Sub-Divisional Officer, and there should be no appeal from his orders beyond the Collector.

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[1] "What we have in view is a system of informal selection by the villagers, at a meeting called for the purpose by the Tehsildar, the Sub-Divisional Officer, or the Special Officer for Panchayats, where one exists........In the event of the meeting showing the existence of acute faction or caste feeling, it would be necessary—if a Panchayat was to be constituted in the circumstances—for the presiding officer to see that it contained representatives of different interests." (Para 705. p. 241).

[2] We would like to draw the attention of the reader to the remarks of the Commission on the procedure in Panchayat courts : "The procedure in Panchayat courts should be under very simple rules, and we agree with those witnesses who hold that the parties should appear in person and not through lawyers, and that appeals should not be allowed, though the regular courts might be given special revisional jurisdiction in cases where there appears to have been some grave miscarriage of justice." (Para 710, p. 242).

[3] Ibid, para 720, p. 244.

As for the income of Panchayats, the Commission felt that the imposition of taxes by the existing Unions and Sanitary Committees had made them unpopular, and recommended that the Panchayat system should not involve fresh taxation. It suggested that the Panchayat's revenue should be derived from the following sources :

(i) The assignment to it of a portion of the land cess levied for local board purposes in the village;
(ii) Special grants, for particular objects of local improvement, to be made by sub-District Boards or Collectors;
(iii) The receipts from village cattle pounds or markets which may be entrusted to its management;
(iv) Small fees on civil suits filed before it.

"Under The Eye And Hand Of District Authorities": Dr. Besant's Scathing Criticism

These recommendations of the Commission show that it gave considerable thought to the question and what it said could form the basis of the organisation of Village Panchayats in India. But one overriding recommendation of the Commission, that they should be completely under the control of district authorities,[1] undid the value of all that it said. This throttling stipulation, in fact, was scathingly criticised by Dr. Annie Besant in her presidential address at the Calcutta Congress in 1917, referred to by us earlier. She said: "Tie up a baby's arms and legs, and then leave it to teach itself to walk. If it does not succeed, blame the baby. The free baby will learn equilibrium through tumbles; the tied-up baby will become paralysed, and will never walk." The manner in which, under British attempts to organise Village Panchayats, the village official was made dependent upon the higher Government officials was recognised by Mrs. Besant as explaining "the killing of the old village system." "The officials became the servants of a higher official—Sub-Tehsildar, Tehsildar, Deputy Collector or Collector—looking to him for favour and reward, not to the villagers. Thus they became village tyrants, not village servants, and the Soul of the Village, the responsibility to one's brother-villagers, died." And further: "On the Procrustes-bed of Bureaucracy, all that did not fit it had to be chopped off; the villagers had their own ways, which had served them well, but they were not the Collector's ways, so they were bad."

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[1] Said the Commission : "We do not, however, agree with the suggestion that the organisation of Village Panchayats should be entrusted to the Registrars of Co-operative Societies in the various provinces for we deem it essential that the movement should be completely under the eye and hand of the district authorities. Supervision of affairs in the villages is, and should remain, one of the main functions of tehsildars and Sub-Divisional Officers; but we recognise that, at the outset, it may be desirable to allow a special Assistant to the Collector to organise and develop Panchayats throughout a district.' (Para 702, p. 240).

On the third day (29th December, 1917) of the 32nd Session of the Congress, Shri Surendra Nath Bannerji, speaking on the XIIth Resolution demanding self-government for India, strongly attacked the halting policy of the British Government with regard to the development of local self-government institutions in India. He said: "The Government have emasculated the institution of local self-government by imposing upon them restrictions and disabilities (cries of shame)."[1]

Half-Hearted Implementation

It may be mentioned that even this policy was implemented in a most half-hearted manner. For example, the Government of India sat tight upon the recommendations of the Decentralisation Commission for about 6 years. The first statement of any significance by the British rulers on this very important Report of a Royal Commission was made in a Resolution of the Government of India on Local Self-Government issued in May, 1915. After a "general commendation", by which the development of the Panchayat institution was hedged in by a number of restrictions, the Government of India was "content to leave the matter in the hands of local Governments and Administration," indicating certain general principles[3] "in which advance is most likely to be successful." There was yet another Resolution issued on 16th May, 1918. The Montague-Chelmsford Report also directed attention to the development of Panchayat system in the villages.

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[1] Report of the XXXII Session of the Indian National Congress held at Calcutta on 26th, 28th and 29th December, 1917, published by Jitendra Lal Banerji on behalf of the Reception Committee, Calcutta, 1918; p. 92.

[2] Paras 37, 38 and 39 of this Resolution deal with Village Panchayats; See Mathai's **Village Government in British India,** Op. cit., Appendix, pp. 199-202.

[3] (1) The experiments should be made in selected villages or areas larger than a village, where the people in general agree.

(2) Legislation, where necessary, should be permissive and general. The powers and duties of Panchayats, whether administrative or judicial, need not and, indeed, should not be identical in every village.

(3) In areas where it is considered desirable to confer judicial as well as administrative functions upon Panchayats the same body should exercise both functions.

(4) Existing village administrative committees, such as village sanitation and education committees, should be merged in the Village Panchayats where these are established.

(5) The jurisdiction of Panchayats in judicial cases should ordinarily be permissive, but in order to provide inducement to litigants reasonable facilities might be allowed to persons wishing to have their cases decided by Panchayats. For instance, court fees, if levied, should be small, technicalities in procedure should be avoided, and possibly a speedier execution of decrees permitted.

(6) Powers of permissive taxation may be conferred on Panchayats, where desired, subject to the control of the local Government or Administration, but the development of the Panchayat system should not be prejudiced by an excessive association with taxation.

(7) The relations of Panchayats, on the administrative side with other administrative bodies should be clearly defined. If they are financed by District or sub-District Boards, there can be no objection to some supervision by such Boards.

Montague-Chelmsford Reforms And After

Naturally enough, in the background of this halting policy, and in view of the resurgence of Indian nationalism following World War I and the appearance of Mahatma Gandhi on the Indian scene, the Indian people, as it were, did not touch the British Panchayat schemes even with a pair of tongs. Following the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms after World War I, a few individuals, who may better remain unnamed and who can be counted on fingers, preferred to get themselves duped, and saw in these Panchayat schemes and allied matters a great prospect for developing India, and preferred to leave the nationalist ranks, where they enjoyed good prestige, to join the British machinery of administration and oppression. Nothing tangible, however, came out of these moves, though, undoubtedly, a number of legislations on Village Panchayats came to adorn the statute books. Thus, there were passed the Madras Panchayat Act XV of 1920, the Bombay Village Panchayat Act IX of 1920, the Bengal Self-Government Act V of 1919, the U.P. Panchayat Act VI of 1920, the Punjab Panchayat Act III of 1922, the Bihar Self-Government Act V of 1920, the C.P. Panchayat Act V of 1920, the Assam Self-Government Act of 1925, etc. Some Indian princely states also enacted legislations in this direction in subsequent years. Thus there were passed the Mysore Panchayat Regulation II of 1926, the Baroda Village Act VI of 1926, the Holkar State Panchayat Act I of 1920, the Cochin Panchayat Regulation V of 1919, the Kolhapur Panchayat Act of 1926, the Bikaner Village Panchayat Act III of 1928, etc. Some other princely States which passed similar legislations were Dewas Senior, Dewas Junior, Dhar, Datia, Patiala, Bhopal, Narsinghgarh, etc.

Whatever reformist illusions may, however, have been created by the Montague-Chelmsford reforms, were completely shattered by the influence of Mahatma Gandhi over the national movement in post-war years. The 33rd Session of the Indian National Congress was held at Delhi under the presidentship of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, and though a considerable Kisan delegation attended the Congress Session for the first time, the entire Delhi Session, more or less, was dominated by discussions on the Reforms proposals and the question of Village Panchayats does not seem to have figured. The 34th Session of the Congress met at Lahore in December-January 1919-20 under the presidentship of Pandit

Motilal Nehru. The Jalianwallah Bagh massacre had preceded this Session, and Indian nationalism was now touching new militant heights. This new atmosphere enveloped the Lahore Congress and Village Panchayats do not seem to have figured there.

Gandhiji Makes Village Panchayats A Fighting Slogan

In the meantime, however, Mahatma Gandhi was developing his ideas of passive resistance against the British rulers, and in his hands the idea of Village Panchayats was evolved as a fighting slogan against the alien regime. At the Special Session of the Congress at Calcutta from 4th to 9th September, 1920, under the presidentship of Lala Lajpat Rai, Mahatma Gandhi's resolution on Non-Cooperation was carried with a decisive majority (1855 against 873), in spite of opposition from such stalwarts as Pandit Malaviya, Mrs. Beasant, C. R. Das, Bipinchandra Pal and even the President. Among other things, the Resolution advised "gradual boycott of British Courts by lawyers and litigants and the establishment of private arbitration courts by their aid for the settlement of private disputes." This, in effect, was a call for the revival of Village Panchayats to settle village disputes and prevent wasteful litigation and resort to law courts.

Dr. Rajendra Prasad On Village Panchayats

Soon after, in the columns of *Young India,* Mahatma Gandhi launched a regular campaign for the creation of Village Panchayats and continuously hammered into the heads of his readers the evils of the law courts as then obtaining in India. Thus, in *Young India* of October 6, 1920, we find an article by "Babu Rajendra Prasad, M.A.M.L., one of the leading members of the Patna Bar, and a member of the Senate and Syndicate of the Patna University." No other than our eminent President of the Indian Republic, Rajendra Babu, one of the earliest associates of Mahatma Gandhi in India, who had withdrawn from a lucrative legal practice following the call of the Calcutta Special Congress, sharply brought out the evils of the law courts, basing himself upon his experience. He said : "Litigation in India is a very expensive affair. The whole system of law courts and the method whereby one is enabled to obtain justice require enormous expenditure—often by the time one gets the fruit of the decree, one has had to spend more than the property in suit is worth." He referred to "Law's delays and the uncertainties of litigation". He said: "In some parts of the country every village has its tout whose sole business and means of livelihood is setting people by the ears of one another. His ability consists in getting up false cases. His title to position in society lies in his capacity to work mischief. The law courts are full of this class of people." As against this, Babu Rajendra Prasad pointed out : "If you go to an out of the way village and try to settle a dispute between two parties, you are usually told by witnesses whom you may examine that *they will tell the truth as they are not appearing before a court but before a* Panch."

Pandit Motilal Nehru On Panchayats

In the subsequent issue of *Young India,* dated October 13, 1920, Mahatma Gandhi reproduced an appeal by Pandit Motilal Nehru, "our respected President of the Amritsar Congress and one of the leading lawyers of the country" from the *Independent,* a daily of Allahabad founded by Motilalji. In this, in Gandhiji's own words, Pandit Motilalji appealed "to the members of his own profession wherein, besides exhorting them to make the boycott of law courts a complete success and organise Panchayats for arbitration, he has described the evils of litigation, from his long experience of 37 years at the Bar." Motilalji said that it could not be denied that "the nature of litigation introduced by British laws and encouraged by the machinery of British courts in this country is responsible for some of the greatest evils we suffer from." From his own experience he had no hesitation in saying that "the moral tone of the profession has steadily declined from top to bottom." He referred to a popular saying: *"Adalat men jo jita so hara, jo hara so mara"* (Success in Court is defeat, and defeat, of course, is death). After further detailing the evils in the system, Pandit Motilal Nehru appealed to "countrymen of all shades of public opinion to join in a holy war against this evil." And he called upon members of his profession "to organise Panchayats and divert to them the ceaseless stream of litigation which flows into the courts."

Panchayats At The Nagpur Congress (1920)

Writing in *Young India* of September 15, 1920, immediately after the Calcutta Special Congress, Mahatma Gandhi told the majority which supported his Non-Cooperation resolution to remember that "the hour of the greatest triumph is the hour of the greatest humility." He reminded them of the new duties which devolved upon those who stood for Non-Cooperation, and among the very first tasks he mentioned was "to promote the cause of settlement of disputes by private arbitration."

On 26th, 28th, 30th and 31st December of the same year, the 35th Session of the Indian National Congress met at Nagpur under the presidentship of Shri C. Vijairaghavachariar. In his presidential address, Shri Vijairaghavachariar referred to ancient Indian polity based upon Village Panchayats. He said that in ancient India "the State was Government by discussion and the villages and the towns which constituted the country were all quasi republics and self-contained, whose affairs were carried on by open discussion and deliberation by all the people," and that in this "ancient judicial system a court never meant a single judge." And Shri Vijairaghavachariar concluded : "The genius for Government by discussion is in our inherited blood and it behoves us to see that in seeking responsible Government we seek the best form of it, viz., Government by discussion as being the most suitable to our national genius."

Village Congress Committees

The late Deshbandhu C. R. Das, who at Calcutta Special Congress was opposed to the Non-Cooperation movement had by now become its supporter, and at the Nagpur Congress he came forward to move the resolution on the subject. And in a powerful speech he pleaded for the establishment of Panchayats to settle disputes. He said :[1] "We not only reaffirm the Calcutta resolution but say that we are not satisfied with the way in which that Resolution has been responded to by the lawyers; and we say that greater effort must be made to secure them, and also we refer to the scheme of settlement of disputes by private arbitration." The Nagpur Congress Resolution on Non-Cooperation said that effective steps should continue to be taken to prepare the country to launch the movement. Among these one called upon "lawyers to make greater efforts to suspend their practice and to devote their attention to national service including boycott of law courts by litigants and fellow lawyers and the settlement of disputes by private arbitration." And, historically most important, for the first time the Congress called upon its adherents to organise Congress Committees in villages. The Non-Cooperation Resolution said that the country should be prepared for freedom's battle "by organising Committees in each village or groups of villages with a provincial central organisation in the principal cities of each Province."

Congress Organises Panchayats

It is not our purpose to trace the subsequent development of Congress struggle. It is apparent, however, that the formation of Village Panchayats mainly for judicial purposes, "the settlement of disputes by private arbitration" as it was called, proceeded apace. A very large number of lawyers all over the country left their practice and devoted themselves to the task. No definite reports on the success that may have been achieved are available.[2] Following mob violence at Chauri Chaura in Gorakhpur district in U.P., the mass Non-Cooperation movement was withdrawn. *Young India* of 2nd March, 1922, published the Bardoli Resolution of the Working Committee (as revised and confirmed by the All India Congress Committee on 11th February, 1922). In this the Working Committee laid down a comprehensive constructive programme to create the necessary atmosphere for mass non-violence. This programme, among other things, called upon Congressmen, "To organise village and town Panchayats for the private settlement of all disputes, reliance being placed solely upon the force of public opinion and the truthfulness of Panchayat decision to ensure obedience to them." And the Working Committee directed: "In order to avoid even the appearance of coercion, no social boycott should be resorted to against those who will not obey Panchayat's decision."

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[1] Report of the 35th Session of the Indian National Congress held at Nagpur, published by Dr. B. S. Moonje, Reception Committee, Nagpur, p. 71.

[2] A perusal of the files of the daily press of these years may give some information, but we have not been able to do so. Under the heading "Interesting Information," **Young India** of 9th March, 1928, published a Report from Messrs. Prakasam, Nageshwara Rao and Narayan Rao about Congress work done in Guntur district of Andhra. The following passage relates to work in connection with Panchayats : "We found the so-called untouchables admitted into the Panchayat Board. In some places orthodox Brahmins took the Panchamas by hand and seated them in their midst, and in some places they are admitted into the premises of Brahmins to do the same services which other castes have been doing."

Mahatma Gandhi was arrested in March 1922, but *Young India* continued its publication, first under the editorship of Shuaib Qureshi and then C. Rajagopalachari. It continued to feature items on Panchayats. In *Young India* of June 22, 1922, we find the following directive of the Central Khilafat Committee, which met at Lucknow on June 9th, 1922, to its workers; "To ascertain the number of Panchayats, to invite the attention of the Khilafat Committees to their defects, if any, and to induce the people to utilise these Panchayats for disposal of their disputes without recourse to law courts." *Young India* dated August 3, 1922, published Draft Rules prepared by the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee for arbitration courts. Very thorough and detailed, these rules deal with such subjects as construction of Panchayats, Reference to Panchayats, Procedure, Expenses, Execution, Punishment, etc.

Shri C. Rajagopalachari On "Civil Revolt" Through Panchayats

The Panchayats continued as an important item in subsequent Congress programmes. Writing editorially in *Young India* of November 16, 1922, under the heading "The Right Programme", Shri C. Rajagopalachari said: "We have been working too much at the top, we should go down to the base. The villages should be the scene of our activities. Our organisations have been manned far too much by the purely political enthusiast. The ordinary citizen should be enrolled in our village associations, and made to work under the wings of the Congress. Every village should have its Sabha which should function not merely in Congress elections and in political meetings but as a co-operative association of villagers working for the welfare of the village in the production of yarn and cloth, in sanitation, in settlement of disputes, in village education and in all other simple forms of social service. A net-work of such rural organisations functioning in the villages without any connection with the Government will be the true foundation for a Civil Revolt. No mass movement is possible unless we have a net-work of such organisations which by their previous non-political functions have enlisted the co-operation of the majority of the inhabitants of every village. This is the real objective of the Constructive Programme."

Deshbandhu Das' Powerful Plea For Panchayats At Gaya Congress

The 37th Session of the Indian National Congress met at Gaya in December 1922, under the presidentship of Deshbandhu C. R. Das. In his powerful address, Deshbandhu made a forceful plea for village local government. He said: "To me the organisation of village life and the practical autonomy of small local centres are more important than either provincial autonomy or Central responsibility, and if the choice lay between the two, I would unhesitatingly accept the autonomy of the local centres. I must not be understood as implying that the village centres will be disconnected units. They must be held together by a system of co-operation and integration. For the present, there must be power in the hands of the provincial and the Indian Government; but the ideal should be accepted once for all, that the proper function of the Central authority, whether in the provincial or the Indian Government, is to advise, having a residuary power to control only in case of need, and to be exercised under proper safeguards. I maintain that real swaraj can only be attained by vesting the power of Government in these local centres."

C. R. Das advocated in his address a scheme of Government in which, he emphasised, regard must be had—

"(1) to the formulation of local centres more or less on the lines of the ancient village system in India;

"(2) the growth of larger and larger groups out of the integration of these village centres;

"(3) the unifying State should be the result of similar growth;

"(4) the village centres and the larger groups must be practically autonomous;

"(5) the residuary power of Control must remain in the Central Government, but the exercise of such power should be exceptional."

Report Of The Civil Disobedience Committee

The Gaya Congress discussed the Report of the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee, which was appointed by a meeting of the All India Congress Committee at Lucknow in June 1922. Consisting of such eminent personalities as Pandit Motilal Nehru, Dr. M. A. Ansari, Shri V. J. Patel, Shri C. Rajagopalachari and others, the Committee was directed to tour the country and report on the question "whether Civil Disobedience in some form, or some other measure of similar character, should be adopted." Referring to the programme of boycott of law courts, the Committee unanimously stated that "this boycott is also sound in principle and must be maintained as an ideal." Thus, while reaffirming the boycott, the Committee recommended suspension of active propaganda for it. It enjoined : "Effort should be concentrated on the establishment of Panchayats and cultivation of a strong public opinion in their favour." Resolution No. 11 of the Gaya Congress recommended that boycott of law courts should continue, and called for greater efforts for setting up Panchayats.

Mahatma Gandhi On Congress Panchayat Work

Long after, writing in *Young India* of May 28, 1931, Mahatma Gandhi made a reference to Panchayat work of Congressmen during these years. He said : "Panchayat has an ancient flavour. It literally means an assembly of five elected by villagers. It represents the system by which the innumerable village republics of India were governed......Congressmen are now making a crude attempt to revive the system by giving village elders civil and criminal jurisdiction. The attempt was first made in 1921. It failed. It is being made again and it will fail if it is not systematically and decently, I will not say scientifically, tried."[1]

Congress attempt to build up Village Panchayats, as Gandhiji categorically says, failed. This failure probably was inherent in the situation. In the presence of exploiting landlord systems buttressed by foreign rulers, as also its agents and touts in the village population, a corrupt revenue, judicial and administrative machinery, and innumerable other difficulties, the attempt to build up non-official Panchayats for the settlement of disputes was almost destined to failure. But the Village Panchayat idea itself became a part of the national idea, though in all subsequent years, as the national movement rose to higher and yet higher militancy, and grappled with innumerable problems it had to face in order to lead India to victory and freedom, the Village Panchayats hardly featured in its resolutions and programmatic declarations.

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[1] The attempt, undoubtedly, met with some initial success in certain parts of the country, as would be clear from a note written by Gandhiji in Young India of March 2, 1922, entitled "Laughing at it." Gandhiji said : "Even the Panchayats came in for ridicule. Little did the critics realise that the masses in many parts of India had ceased to resort to law courts. If we do not organise honest Panchayats, they will certainly go back to the existing law courts."

Panchayats In The Context Of Gandhiji's Philosophy Of Life

The Panchayat idea, nevertheless, became a part and parcel of national thinking. It had to be so with Mahatma Gandhi at the head of the marching millions of India. Indeed, we would humbly submit, Mahatma Gandhi's emphasis on Panchayats has to be viewed not in isolation but in the context of his entire philosophy of life and his unique technique of uplifting a down-trodden, enslaved nation from slavery to freedom and thence to social regeneration. Throughout his life, in fact up to his very last moments, Gandhiji time and again referred to recreating Panchayats as the solid base upon which new India had to be built. In what follows we would attempt to briefly collect his pronouncements on the subject, though, we feel, much more research and study is required to bring out thoroughly and vividly his ideas on the development of decentralised democracy through Village Panchayats.

Gandhiji's Presidential Address At Belgaum Congress

The 39th Session of the Indian National Congress met at Belgaum in December, 1924. Mahatma Gandhi, who had been released by then, presided over this Session. He suggested a twelve-point Swaraj scheme in his address. The third point was as follows: "Administration of justice should be cheapened, and with that end in view the final court of appeal should be not in London but in Delhi. Parties in civil suits must be compelled in the majority of cases to refer their disputes to arbitration, the decisions of these Panchayats to be final except in cases of corruption or obvious misapplication of law. Multiplicity of intermediate courts should be avoided."

A Major Pronouncement On Panchayats By Gandhiji (1925)

After Belgaum Congress, in 1925, Mahatma Gandhi extensively toured the country. In these tours he visited innumerable villages in different parts of India and further enriched his great knowledge of the Indian peasantry. The idyllic simplicity of the villagers, their susceptibility to superstition, and their respect for tradition and custom in spite of the fact that they had the effect of keeping them down as helots and also their keen resentment at their existing state, Gandhiji's speeches at their meetings—all these have been described by Mahadev Desai in a publication.[1] In order to better understand the impact of this tour on Mahatma Gandhi's mind, this book would be found invaluable, though, we regret we cannot go into it here. Later in 1925, in September, Gandhiji had the occasion to address some students at Calcutta. In this speech, reported by M. D. in *Young India,* dated September 17, 1925, Mahatma Gandhi made a pointed reference to village organisation. He said : "Village organisation seemed a simple word, but it meant the organisation of the whole of India, inasmuch as India was predominantly rural." Gandhiji referred to the writings of Maine on Indian village communities and said : "Indian village life had so much vitality and character that it had persisted all these long years and weathered many a storm......These villages were so many village republics, completely self-contained, having all that one may want—schools, arbitration boards, sanitation boards, and no Poor Law indeed, but ample provision for the relief of the poor." Gandhiji referred to the treasures of art that the genius of the Indian villager had produced, and said : "The villager then learnt from his parents by word of mouth all the wisdom that he should learn." In this system, Gandhiji said : "The village headman was a personality in himself. He was not the impostor of today; he was the servant of the people whom they could go to in times of difficulties, whom every child in the village knew and loved. He was incorruptible, he was a gentleman. But such a one was a rare bird today." And Gandhiji asked with a sigh : "What has come over this land that all these beautiful things are not to be found anywhere, that instead of these self-contained villages of a few hundred years ago, we find villages dependent for their very necessities of life on Lancashire or Japan. The whole village life was broken. People were dying by millions of malaria, hookworm and other diseases, all brought about by insanitation, deep poverty, sloth and idleness."

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[1] Gandhiji in Indian Villages by Mahadev Desai, Publishers: S. Ganesan, Madras, 1927.

The "Trinity Of Evil"

Gandhiji then posed the question : "What created this disruption and brought about this downfall?" And he replied : "One might search the records of the East India Company and see for himself how ruthlessly the village system was broken up by means mainly foul. Men who had served the East India Company had left imperishable records of how injustice, bribery and corruption reigned supreme in those days, and how relentlessly the handicrafts of India were ruined." Gandhiji recounted his experiences of floods and other disasters in South Africa, but said : "Here there was no occupation save agriculture, no work and no savings, unemployment four months and even six months." He said this was the real problem to be faced in India. And he called upon his young audience : "I say go with your character to the villages.... Let any youngman who has a character to save venture out to the villages and he will get a response. But he will have to be patient and truthful......He will not go out as a patron saint of the villages, he will have to go in humility with a broom-stick in his hand.

There is a Trinity of Evil in insanitation, poverty and idleness that you will have to face and you will fight them with broom-sticks, quinine and castor oil, and if you will believe me, with the spinning wheel......You must come down from your high pedestals, stoop to conquer, take the risk of catching malaria yourself. This work will give you all the satisfaction that your soul can desire. It will enrich the villager's life and your life."

Gandhiji On Indian Villages (1926-27)

Indeed, the problem of the poverty of the Indian peasant and the degraded state of our villages now increasingly became the most dominant factor in Gandhiji's thinking, and this intensity is reflected in his ever-increasing passionate pleading for the popularisation of *Charkha* in the villages. Through the spinning wheel he sought to revitalise the slothful villages. Addressing the students of Gujarat Vidyapith in 1926, Gandhiji said : "Government contact with the villages ends with the collection of revenue. Our contact with them begins with their service through the spinning wheel, but it does not end there. The spinning wheel is the centre of that service." He told his listeners : "If you spend your next vacation in some village in the interior, you will find the people cheerless and fear-stricken. You will find houses in ruins. You will look in vain for any sanitary or hygienic conditions. You will find the cattle in a miserable way and you will see idleness stalking there."[1]

Addressing a meeting at Comilla (now in East Bengal), on January 5, 1927, Gandhiji referred to the neglect of the villages. He said : [2] "We the city dwellers are living upon the labour and upon the wealth of these villagers; not like the Americans, not like the Englishmen, who live upon the exploitation of the Asiatic races or the so-called weaker races of the earth. Even they would be obliged to take up the spinning wheel or any equivalent, if they were not able to exploit India, China, Africa and other parts of the earth." From Bengal Gandhiji went on a tour of Bihar. In fact, through his constant tours, and the heavy correspondence he carried on with people from all parts of the country, he kept a continuous study of the conditions in Indian villages. In 1927, he wrote : "The more I penetrate the village the greater is the shock delivered as I perceive the blank stare in the eyes of the villagers I meet. Having nothing else to do but to work as labourers side by side with their bullocks, they have become almost like them. It is a tragedy of the first magnitude that millions have ceased to use their hands as hands. Nature is revenging herself upon us with terrible effect for this criminal waste of the gift she has bestowed upon us human beings. We refuse to make full use of the gift. It is the exquisite mechanism of the hands that among a few other things separates us from the beast. Millions of us use them merely as feet. The result is that she starves both the body and the mind. Owing to this waste we are living in a state of suspended animation. It can be revived if every home is again turned into a spinning mill. With it will at once revive the ancient rustic art and the rustic song. A semi-starved nation can have neither religion nor art nor organisation."[1]

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[1] From Tendulkar's Mahatma, Vol. II, p. 300

[2] Ibid, p. 324.

A Bihar Experience: A Tip To Bardoli Peasants

It follows from these pronouncements of Gandhiji that while he increasingly saw and felt the poverty of the Indian peasants, and he traced the causes to British revenue policies and the domination of the cities, his main emphasis for bringing about a change for the better was on efforts by the villagers themselves. While he led and guided determined Kisan struggles against immediate grievances, and won brilliant victories, his emphasis still remained on attempts by the Kisans themselves to live cleanly, to have better sanitation, and not on such demands as abolition of the zamindari system and other parasitic tenures. It is significant that while in his overall scheme of things, as they were emerging and finding concrete shape, there could be no place for rich people and their luxuries, and everybody was required to labour and work for his living, Gandhiji did not advance any slogan as such against any particular class in society. In his Autobiography, serialised first in *Young India* as *The Story of My Experiments with Truth,* in Part V, Chapter XVIII, published in his journal dated August 16, 1928, he refers to his experience in Champaran villages. In a village Mrs. Gandhi asked women to wash their *saris* they were wearing as they were very dirty. The women retorted that Kasturba should ask Gandhiji to get another *sari* for them as they had no other cloth for change. In this village, through volunteers, Gandhiji achieved some success. He has recorded : "The volunteers with their schools, sanitation work and medical relief gained the respect and confidence of village folk and were able to bring good influence upon them." Gandhiji's regret was that the volunteers came for short periods and so the work could not be carried on further, but he, nevertheless, remained convinced that only corporate work by the villagers could improve their conditions. In the same issue of *Young India* (dated August 16, 1928), he commented editorially upon the victory of the Bardoli *Satyagraha* led by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. Writing under the heading "A Sign of the Times," he asked the people of Bardoli whether they had learnt the lessons of the struggle? And he said :

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[1] Ibid, pp. 332-3.

"If they have, then they will know from day to day that they will not become a non-violent organisation unless they undergo a process of what may be called corporate cleansing. This they can only do by engaging in carrying out a well thought out constructive programme requiring combined effort and promoting common good. In other words, before they can claim to have become a non-violent organisation, they must receive education in non-violence not through speeches or writings, necessary as both may be, but through an unbroken series of corporate acts each evoking the spirit of non-violence."

These "combined efforts for promoting common good", these "unbroken series of corporate acts", which the Father of the Nation regarded as primary for the uplift of the Indian villages could only be aroused through Village Panchayats.

Gandhiji's Instructions To Panchayat Workers In 1931

It would appear that during all these years, while the call for the creation of Panchayats given during the Non-Cooperation days had not made much headway, Congressmen had nevertheless organised Panchayats in villages which continued to function. In 1931, Mahatma Gandhi went to Naini Tal in connection with the No-rent Campaign of the U.P. Congress Committee, and there he heard reports of some such Panchayats trying criminal cases, and even cases of rape. About the same time he received a report from Assam where Panchayats functioned as a sort of rival administrative machinery for the trial of civil and criminal cases. Gandhiji did not approve of this. Writing in *Young India* of May 28, 1931, he said : "This is all bad if true. Irregular Panchayats are bound to fall to pieces under their own unsupportable weight." He accordingly suggested the following set of rules for the guidance of village workers :

1. "No Panchayats should be set up without the written sanction of a Provincial Congress Committee;
2. "A Panchayat should in the first instance be elected by a public meeting called for the purpose by beat of drum;
3. "It should be recommended by the Tehsil Committee;
4. "Such Panchayats should have no criminal jurisdiction;
5. "It may try civil suits if the parties to them refer their disputes to the Panchayat;
6. "No one should be compelled to refer any matter to the Panchayat;
7. "No Panchayat should have any authority to impose fines, the only sanction behind its civil decrees being its moral authority, strict impartiality and the willing obedience of the parties concerned;

8. "There should be no social or other boycott for the time being;
9. "Every Panchayat will be expected to attend to :
   (a) The education of boys and girls in its village,
   (b) Its sanitation,
   (c) Its medical needs,
   (d) The upkeep and cleanliness of village wells or ponds,
   (e) The uplift of and the daily wants of the so-called untouchables;
10. "A Panchayat that fails without just cause to attend to the requirements mentioned in clause 9 within six months of its election, or fails otherwise to retain the goodwill of the villagers, or shares self-condemned for any other cause, appearing sufficient to the Provincial Congress Committee, may be disbanded and another elected in its place."

Gandhiji added: "The disability to impose fines or social boycott is a necessity of the case in the initial stages. Social boycott in villages has been found to be a dangerous weapon in the hands of ignorant or unscrupulous men. Imposition of fines too may lead to mischief and defeat the very end in view. Where a Panchayat is really popular and increases its popularity by the constructive work of the kind suggested in clause 9, it will find its judgements and authority respected by reason of its moral prestige. And that surely is the greatest sanction any one can possess and of which one cannot be deprived."

'Panchayat Revival To Prevent Ruin Of Villages'

A few months later, in August 1931, Mahatma Gandhi again made a reference to Panchayats. After the Karachi Congress Resolution on fundamental rights, a Fundamental Rights Committee was set up and it reported to the All India Congress Committee meeting in Bombay in August first week. The Bombay A.I.C.C. unanimously adopted the fundamental rights as proposed by the Committee. A Correspondent wrote to Gandhiji that the A.I.C.C. had omitted from its recital of fundamental rights that of trial by ury. Commenting upon it, Gandhiji said : "What we must aim at is an incorruptible, impartial and able judiciary from the bottom. I regard Village Panchayats as an institution by itself. But thanks o the degradation of the caste system and the evil influence of the present system of Government and the growing illiteracy of the masses, this ancient and noble institution has fallen into desuetude, nd where it has not, it has lost its former purity and hold. It must, owever, be revived at any cost, if the villages are not to be ruined."

Gandhiji's Reference To Villages At London R. T. C.

During Gandhiji's visit to London in 1931, as the sole representative of the Congress to the Round Table Conference, the Indian village featured in a very special way. In his second speech to the Federal Structure Committee, Mahatma Gandhi said the following as regards the formation of the electorate : "We would have 5,00,000 units (village units). Each unit will elect its own representative and those representatives will be the electorate that would elect, if you will, representatives to the Central or Federal legislature."[1] This declaration surprised certain friends who felt that by this Gandhiji had accepted the principle of indirect election. Indeed, some days later, some Indian students in London posed this question before Gandhiji. Referring to this suggestion of the election of a representative by every village in India, they asked : "Why did you commit yourself to the indirect method of election?" Gandhiji replied : "Your question is good, but it betrays what we call in logic an ambiguous middle." He said that what he suggested is not indirect method of election but "a different thing altogether." Gandhiji continued : "As for the method I propounded, I may tell you that it is daily growing upon me. All that you need to understand is that it is intimately connected with adult suffrage which cannot be effectively worked except by it. After all you will have seven hundred thousand electors, themselves elected by the whole adult population of India. Without any method it will be an unwieldy and expensive electorate. Every village republic, to use the words of Maine, would choose an attorney and instruct him to elect a representative for the highest legislature in the land."

On Village Sanitation

Mahatma Gandhi was arrested soon after his return from London in connection with the second Civil Disobedience Movement. After his release in the middle of 1933, he gave his all-out attention to the Harijan problem. In fact *Young India,* which had ceased publication during the hectic Civil Disobedience days, was now revived in the name of *Harijan.* But, it is apparent, in all his activities and in all his thoughts, the Indian villages were always upper-most. All his programmes, in fact, had the object of uplifting the villages. And in all his writings and pronouncements the villages, their problems and solutions recur again and again. Thus, in 1934, while he was convalescing after an illness, he gave part of his time to workers who came to him with their doubts. In one such talk he gave his ideas about how a village worker should function. He felt that a village worker "must be a living embodiment of industry." He added : "If he will go there as a teacher, he will go there no less as a learner. He will enter into every detail of village life, he will discover the village handicrafts and investigate the possibilities of their growth and their improvement. He may find the villagers completely apathetic to the message of Khadi, but he will, by his life of service, compel interest and attention. Of course, he will not forget his limitations and will not engage in, for him, the futile task of solving the problem of agricultural indebtedness. Sanitation and hygiene will engage a good part of his attention. His home and surroundings will not only be a model of cleanliness, but he will help to promote sanitation in the whole vilage by taking the broom and the basket round.......Then he will nterest himself in the welfare of village Harijans. His home will ever be open to them. In fact, they will turn to him naturally for help in their troubles and difficulties. If the village folk will not suffer him to have Harijan friends in his house situated in their midst, he must take up his residence in the Harijan quarters."

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[1] Reported by M. D. in Young India, dated October 8, 1931.

On Literacy

And he gave the following instructions with regard to spread of literacy : "A word about the knowledge of the alphabet. It has ts place, but I would warn you against a misplaced emphasis on t. Do not proceed on the assumption that you cannot proceed with rural reconstruction without first teaching the children or the adults how to read and write. Lots of useful information on the current affairs, history, geography and elementary arithmetic, can be given by the word of mouth before the alphabet is touched. The eyes, the ears, and the tongue come before the hand." And he told the village workers : "Remember that our weapons are spiritual. It s a force that works irresistibly, if imperceptibly. Its progress is geometrical rather than arithmetical. It never ceases so long as here is a propeller behind. The background of all your activities, has, therefore, to be spiritual. Hence the necessity for the strictest purity of conduct and character."[1]

Gandhiji's emphasis on village programmes, on village industries and the rest, evoked criticism that his cry of 'back to villages' was a cry of despair and was turning the clock back. Addressing he annual meeting of the Gandhi Seva Sangh at Wardha in the last week of November, 1934, he replied to this criticism. Gandhiji said: This cry of 'back to the village', some critics say, is putting back the ands of the clock of progress. But is it really so? Is it going back o the village, or rendering back to it what belongs to it? I am not sking the city dwellers to go and live in the villages. But I am sking them to render unto the villagers that which is due to them.

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[1] Tendulkar's Mahatma, Vol. 3, pp. 349-351.

Is there a single raw material that the city dwellers can obtain except from the villager? If they cannot, why not teach him to work on it himself, as he used to before and as he would do now but for our exploiting inroads?"[1]

Gandhiji On Ideal Indian Village

Indeed, *Harijan* became a practical guide to village reconstruction. Gandhiji kept himself fully absorbed in constructive work and *Harijan* columns were almost entirely devoted to this task. A village worker of district Birbhum in Bengal sent to Gandhiji the following questions through C. F. Andrews : (1) What is an ideal Indian village in your esteemed opinion and how far is it practicable to reconstruct a village on the basis of an 'Ideal Village,' in the present social and political situation of India; and (2) Which of the village problems should a worker try to solve first of all and how should he proceed? Mahatma Gandhi gave the following reply :[2]

"An ideal Indian village will be so constructed as to lend itself to perfect sanitation. It will have cottage with sufficient light and ventilation built of a material obtainable within a radius of five miles of it. The cottages will have courtyards enabling householders to plant vegetables for domestic use and to house their cattle. The village lanes and streets will be free of all avoidable dust. It will have wells according to its needs and accessible to all. It will have houses of worship for all, also a common meeting place, a village common for grazing its cattle, a co-operative dairy, primary and secondary schools in which industrial education will be the central fact, and it will have Panchayats for settling disputes. It will produce its own grains, vegetables and fruit, and its own khadi. This is roughly my idea of a model village. In the present circumstances its cottages will remain what they are with slight improvements. Given a good zamindar, where there is one, or co-operation among the people, almost the whole of the programme other than model cottages can be worked out at an expenditure within the means of the villagers including the zamindar or zamindars, without Government assistance. With that assistance there is no limit to the possibility of village reconstruction. But my task just now is to discover what the villagers can do to help themselves if they have mutual co-operation and contribute voluntary labour for the common good. I am convinced that they can, under intelligent guidance, double the village income as distinguished from individual income. There are in our villages inexhaustible resources not for

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[1] Tendulkar's **Mahatma**, Vol. 4, p. 7.

[2] **Harijan**, January 9, 1937.

ommercial purposes in every case but certainly for local purposes
ı almost every case. The greatest tragedy is the hopeless unwill-
ıgness of the villagers to better their lot.

"The very first problem the village worker will solve is its sani-
ation. It is the most neglected of all the problems that baffle
orkers and that undermine physical well-being and breed disease.
f the worker became a voluntary *bhangi,* he would begin by col-
ecting nightsoil and turning it into manure and sweeping village
treets. He will tell people how and where they should perform
aily functions and speak to them on the value of sanitation and
ıe great injury caused by its neglect. The workers will continue
ɔ do the work whether the villagers listen to him or not."

'Village Movement Has Come To Stay"

Another very interesting reference to villages occurs in July 3,
937 issue of *Harijan.* Capt. Strunk, "representative of the Official
ewspaper in Germany and a member of Hitler's staff" visited Seva-
ram "with a view to investigate conditions in India." He asked
andhiji the following question : "There is so much over-produc-
on of intelligence in India and so much educated unemployment.
ould not this army of educated young men be utilised by being
ent to the villages?" Gandhiji replied : "That movement has
ommenced. But it is only in its infancy. And then there is no
ver-production of intelligence but over-production of degrees. The
rain power has not at all increased. Only the art of memorizing
as been stimulated, and these degrees cannot be carted to the
illages. Only the brains, if there are any left, can be used. This
eading for degrees has deprived us of initiative. It makes us unfit
ɔ go to the villages. The mechanical university study deprives us
f the desire for originality; years of memorizing causes a fatigue
f the mind that makes most of us fit for clerical work. Neverthe-
ss the village movement has come to stay."

CHAPTER IX

GANDHIJI ON PANCHAYATS (1940 and After)

"If some of you see the Indian villages, you will not be fascinated by the sight. You will have to scratch below the dung heap. I do not pretend to say that they were ever places of paradise. Today, they are really dung heaps. They were not like that before. What I say is not from history, but from what I have seen myself. I have travelled from one end of India to the other, and I have seen the miserable specimens of humanity with the lustreless eyes. They are India. In these humble cottages, in the midst of these dung heaps, are to be found humble 'bhangis,' in whom you find the concentrated essence of wisdom." [1]

—MAHATMA GANDHI

"You are the people who give food to the world. You live by the sweat of your toil, and not merely that, it is on the results of your toil that most others live. The world cannot do without you and if the world cannot, much less the zamindar.

"The peasant does not belong to the third or the last estate but to the first estate. The rest are parasites. He is the food-giver. If he was idle the whole world would starve. His is also comparatively the purest life in the world. Character always depends on whether a man works for his own bread or works others for his bread, and the peasant is the least dependent among all mankind. I resent the description of the peasant as a 'poor, wretched creature'. No, if any one has the right to walk with his head erect on earth, it is the peasant. Why should he bow his knees before anyone, be he a zamindar or an officer of the Government? Let them bow to him without whom all of them must starve." [2]

—VALLABHBHAI PATEL

THE village movement had indeed come to stay. Gandhiji gave attention to the production of literature relating to the movement, and his chief lieutenant in economic matters, Shri J. C. Kumarappa, wrote and published a series of valuable books on the subject. May be that Gandhiji, having felt convinced that the movement had got a firm foothold, now wanted to further consolidate it by giving it a definite shape in the pattern of village organisation; and probably, with his amazing foresight, he felt that the outbreak of World War II would result in victory for his life-long battle for Indian freedom; whatever the reasons, it is clear that his pronouncements on Panchayats after 1940 are marked by their sharpness, clarity and details.

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[1] Address to closing session of the Inter-Asian Relations Conference, New Delhi, April 2, 1947.

[2] From Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel by N. D. Parikh, Vol. I, Navjiwan Publishing House, Ahmedabad.

World War II started in September 1939, and soon after the Congress Ministries resigned. In June 1941, Germany attacked the Soviet Union. Japan also delivered a stunning blow on the U.S. Navy at Pearl Harbour. Gandhiji did not approve of the Congress Working Committee resolution at Bardoli in December 1941. He stood for complete non-participation in the War under all circumstances. In January 1942, he decided to re-start the *Harijan* which had earlier ceased publication. In the very first editorial, dated January 18, under the caption "Peace Organisation", he wrote: "The Congress has become popular because it has been foremost in fighting imperialism. Today the old way is of no avail. Nobody thinks of mass revolt at present. The best, quickest and the most efficient way is to build up from the bottom. The psychological moment has come. 'Back to the villages!' has become a necessity from every point of view. Now is the time to decentralise production and distribution. Every village has to become a self-sufficient repubilc. It does not require brave resolutions. It requires brave, corporate, intelligent work."

Gandhiji Gives His Idea Of Village Swaraj

On March 7, 1942, Rangoon fell to the invading Japanese armies and Japan now knocked at the very gates of India. In the columns of the *Harijan,* Gandhiji started giving instructions to the Nation. In the course of his writings, he had suggested evacuation from the cities of those who were not wanted for service or other reasons. And he had suggested that "this shifting of the population, if it is wisely done, must result in a silent reorganisation of the villages." He was thereupon posed with different questions. "Did he imagine the villages to be safe?" Another question was: "In view of the situation that may arise any moment in India, would you give an outline or skeleton of a village swaraj committee, which could function in all village matters in the absence of, and without relying upon, an overhead Government or other organisation?"

To this question Gandhiji gave a detailed reply in which we find his conception of village self-rule brought forth with vividness and clarity the like of which is not found in any of his previous pronouncements. We quote extensively the relevant portion from the

Harijan of July 26, 1942. Gandhiji said : "My idea of village swaraj is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its vital wants, and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity. Thus the village's first concern will be to grow its own food crops and cotton for its cloth. It should have a reserve for its cattle, recreation and playground for adults and children. Then if there is more land available, it will grow useful money crops, thus excluding *ganja,* tobacco, opium and the like. The village will maintain a village theatre, school and public hall. It will have its own waterworks ensuring a clean water supply. This can be done through controlled wells or tanks. Education will be compulsory up to the final basic course. As far as possible, every activity will be conducted on co-operative basis. There will be no caste, such as we have today with their graded untouchability. Non-violence with its technique of *satyagraha* and non-co-operation will be the sanction of the village community. There will be a compulsory service of village guards who will be selected by rotation from the register maintained by the village. The government of the village will be conducted by the Panchayat of five persons annually elected by the adult villagers, male and female, possessing minimum prescribed qualifications. These will have all the authority and jurisdiction required. Since there will be no system of punishments in the accepted sense, this Panchayat will be the legislature, judiciary and executive combined to operate for its year of office. Any village can become such a republic without much interference, even from the present Government whose sole effective connection with the villages is the exaction of village revenue. I have not examined here the question of relations with the neighbouring villages and the centre, if any. My purpose is to present an outline of village government. Here there is perfect democracy based upon individual freedom. The individual is the architect of his own government. The law of non-violence rules him and the government. He and his village are able to defy the might of a world. For the law governing every villager is that he will suffer death in the defence of his and his village's honour."

On The Eve Of August 1942

In June 1942, the American journalist Louis Fischer interviewed Gandhiji. Later Fischer published this interview in a booklet *A Week with Gandhi.* In the course of the interview Gandhiji again stressed the distribution of power among the villages. He said : "You see, the centre of power now is in New Delhi, or in Calcutta and Bombay, in the big cities. I would have it distributed among the seven hundred thousand villages of India. That will mean that there is no power. In other words, I want the seven hundred thousand dollars now invested in the imperial bank withdrawn and distributed among the seven hundred thousand villages. Then each village will have its one dollar which cannot be lost." He continued : "The seven hundred thousand dollars invested in the imperial bank could be swept away by a bomb from a Japanese plane, whereas if they were distributed among the seven hundred thousand shareholders, nobody could deprive them of their assets. There will then be voluntary co-operation between these seven hundred thousand units, voluntary co-operation, not co-operation induced by Nazi methods. Voluntary co-operation will produce real freedom and a new order, vastly superior to the new order in Soviet Russia."

Roots Of Democracy In Panchayat System

Soon after, on August 8, 1942, the 'Quit India' movement was launched and Gandhiji, as also the entire Congress leadership, was arrested. Then followed a period of intense repression. In 1943, the Government of India published a pamphlet *Congress Responsibility for the Disturbances*. Gandhiji sent a long reply to it in July. Our interest in this reply lies in the reference to Panchayats. In Para 71 of his reply, Gandhiji said : "From its very inception, the Congress has been a democratic body, seeking to represent all India. However feeble and imperfect the attempt may have been, the Congress has never in its history of now nearly sixty years shifted its gaze from the pole-star of India's freedom. It has progressed from stage to stage in its march towards democracy in the truest term. If it is said, as it has been said, that the Congress learnt the spirit of democracy from Great Britain—no Congressman would care to deny the statement—though it must be added that the roots were to be found in the old Panchayat system."

Gandhiji On A "Gandhian Constitution" For India

Following an illness, Gandhiji was released on May 6, 1944. The succeeding months were occupied with his convalescence, Gandhi-Jinnah talks, the release of the members of the Congress Working Committee, the Simla Conference, etc. In between Gandhiji met workers and continued to give them instructions about problems which faced them in constructive work and work in the villages. In November 1945, he penned a foreword to a book entitled *Gandhian Constitution for Free India* by Principal Shriman Narayan Agarwal of Commerce College, Wardha. As the author explains in the introduction, he undertook the work after consultations with Gandhiji who had agreed to give him the necessary guidance. He says: "I have discussed with him almost all the details of the Constitution and every attempt has been made to represent his views correctly." Gandhiji in his foreword said : "The word 'constitution' must not mislead the reader into thinking that the author has made any profession to give him a complete constitution. He has made it perfectly clear in the beginning pages that he has only laid down broad lines to indicate what a constitution of my conception would be. I regard Principal Agarwal's to be a thoughtful contribution to the many attempts at presenting India with constitutions. The merit of his attempt consists in the fact that he has done what, for want of time, I have failed to do." He warned the reader against "mistaking the particular writing being my view in every detail." He, however, added: "All, therefore, I am able to say is that the brochure contains ample evidence of the care bestowed upon it by the author to make it as accurate as he could. There is nothing in it which has jarred on me as inconsistent with what I would like to stand for."

Panchayat Functions Enumerated

The importance of these words of Gandhiji is obvious. It may be regarded that the Panchayats based on the constitution of Principal Shriman Narayan may be said to give an inkling of Mahatmaji's mind about them. And so a very brief review of Shriman Narayan's ideas on Panchayats would be relevant and useful.

The author bases himself upon Gandhiji's idea that "Self-sufficient and self-governing villages should be the basic units of public administration in India." Of course, "in case of small and neighbouring villages, a group of villages may constitute the basic unit of administration." The following is what Shriman Narayan has suggested for the election and functions of the Panchayat at the village level :

The Panchayat : Every village shall elect, by the vote of all its adults a Panchayat of, ordinarily, five persons. In the case of bigger villages, the number may vary from seven to eleven. The Panchayat shall elect unanimously its President or Sarpanch. If this unanimity is not possible, all the adults of the village shall elect the President directly out of the members of Panchayat.

The term of the Panchayat shall ordinarily be three years. There will be nothing to prevent the same member or members of the Panchayat from being re-elected for the second or third term, but not more. If, however, a certain member of the Panchayat loses the confidence of the village before the expiry of his usual term, he shall be recalled by a majority-vote of seventy-five per cent.

The Village Panchayat shall have the sole authority to appoint, suspend or dismiss the village servants like the *chowkidar, patwari* and police officials.

The decisions of the Panchayat shall be, as far as possible, unanimous, specially in cases that affect the rights of minorities.

Functions : Since the villages shall enjoy maximum local autonomy, the functions of the Village Panchayats shall be very wide and comprehensive covering almost all aspects of social, economic and political life of the village community. They shall be :

1. **Education :** (a) to run a Primary or Lower Basic School through the medium of a productive craft, thus combining cultural and technical education.
   (b) to maintain a Library and a Reading Room. Books in the Library should be educative, having a direct bearing on the social, economic and political activities of the village.
   (c) to run a Night School for adults.
2. **Recreation :** (a) to provide for *Akhada,* Gymnasium and playgrounds. Swadeshi games and sports shall be encouraged.
   (b) to arrange Art and Craft Exhibitions from time to time.
   (c) to celebrate collectively the important festivals of all communities.
   (d) to organise seasonal fairs.
   (e) to conduct *bhajan* and *kirtan mandals.*
   (f) to encourage folk-songs, folk-dance and folk-theatre.
3. **Protection :** (a) to maintain Village Guardians for general protection of the village against thieves, dacoits and wild animals.
   (b) to impart regular training to all citizens in the technique of Satyagraha or non-violent resistance and defence.
4. **Agriculture :** (a) to assess the rent of each agricultural plot in the village.
   (b) to collect rent from the land-holders.
   (c) to encourage and organise consolidation of holdings and co-operative farming.
   (d) to make proper arrangements for irrigation.
   (e) to provide for good seeds and efficient implements through co-operative shops.
   (f) to see that, as far as possible, all the necessary food-grains are produced in the village itself. The present system of commercial crops shall be discouraged.
   (g) to review, scrutinise and, if necessary, scale down the debts and regulate their rates of interest. Where possible, to organise co-operative credit banks.
   (h) to check soil erosion and reclaim waste land through joint effort.
5. **Industries :** (a) to organise the production of Khadi for village consumption.

(b) to organise other village industries on co-operative lines.
(c) to run a co-operative dairy. The cow shall be encouraged in place of the buffalo.
(d) to run a village tannery using the hides of dead animals.

6. **Trade and Commerce :** (a) to organise co-operative marketing of agricultural and industrial products.
(b) to organise co-operative consumer's societies.
(c) to export only the surplus commodities and import only those necessaries which cannot be produced in the village.
(d) to maintain co-operative godowns.
(e) to provide cheap credit facilities to village artisans for necessary purposes.

7. **Sanitation and Medical Relief:** (a) to maintain good sanitation in the village through proper drainage system.
(b) to prevent public nuisances and check the spread of epidemics.
(c) to make adequate arrrangements for healthy drinking water.
(d) to maintain a village hospital and maternity-home, providing free medical treatment. Indigenous systems of medicine, naturopathy and bio-chemistry shall be encouraged.

8. **Justice :** (a) to provide cheap and speedy justice to villagers. The Panchayats shall have wide legal powers, both criminal and civil.
(b) to make arrangements for free legal aid and information.

9. **Finance and Taxation:** (a) to levy and collect village taxes for special purposes. Payments in kind and collective manual labour for village projects shall be encouraged.
(b) to collect private donations on social and religious occasions.
(c) to see that proper accounts of income and expenditure are maintained. These shall be open to public inspection and audit.

Judicial Functions

About the judicial functions of the village body, Shriman Narayan said the following :

"The Gram Panchayats shall be entrusted with the dispensing of justice; no separate judicial Panchayats are necessary. The poor peasant need not go out of his village, spend hard-earned money and waste weeks and months in towns on litigation. He can get all the necessary witnesses in the village and fight out his own case without being exploited by lawyers. When intricate points of law arise, Sub-Judge from the Taluka, or District could come down to the village and assist the Panchayat in deciding difficult cases. The Sub-Judge shall also act as guide, friend and philosopher to the ignorant villagers by acquainting them with the laws of the State. Such a judicial system will not only be simple, prompt and cheap but also 'just' because the details of civil and criminal cases will be, more or less, open secrets in the village and there shall be hardly any scope for fraud and legal juggleries."

Village, The Basic Unit

In Shriman Narayan's scheme, over the Village Panchayats should be Taluka Panchayats. He advocates the break-up of existing Talukas into smaller units with about 20 villages and a population of 20,000. The Presidents of Village Panchayats should be members of the Taluka Panchayats, whose Presidents in turn will constitute the District Panchayat and so on to the Provincial and All India Panchayats. The functions of these bodies at their respective levels have been enumerated. Shriman Narayan says: "The administrative system envisaged in this Constitution is that of a pyramid whose broad base is composed of numberless village communities of the country. The higher Panchayats shall tender sound advice, give expert guidance and information, supervise and co-ordinate the activities of the Village Panchayats with a view to increasing the efficiency of administration and public service. But, in the non-violent State of Gandhiji's conception, it will be the basic units that would dictate to the Centre and not vice versa. In fact, the whole system will be turned upside down; the village shall become the real and moving unit of the administration."

Gandhiji's Picture Of Independent India

Gandhiji wrote the foreword to Shriman Narayan's book in November 1945. The book was published in early 1946 and drew wide attention. A few months after, in July 1946, Gandhiji gave very complete picture of his idea of the Panchayat system. In *Harijan* of July 22, 1946, he answered the following question from a correspondent: "Would you kindly give a broad but a omprehensive picture of the Independent India of your own coneption?" Gandhiji said: "Indian independence must begin at he bottom. Thus, every village will be a republic or Panchayat, aving full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to e self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs, even to the xtent of defending itself against the whole world. It will be rained and prepared to perish in the attempt to defend itself against ny onslaught from without. Thus, ultimately, it is the individual vho is the unit. But this does not exclude dependence on the willing help from the neighbours or from the world. It will b free and voluntary play of mutual forces. Such a society is necessarily highly cultured in which every man and woman knows wha he or she wants and, what is more, knows that no one should wan anything that the others cannot have with equal labour.

"This society must naturally be based on truth and non-violenc which, in my opinion, are not possible without a living force whic inheres every other force known to the world, and which depend on none, and which will live when all other forces may conceivabl perish or cease to act. I am unable to account for my life, withou belief in this all-embracing living light.

"In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there wil be ever-widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But, it will b an oceanic circle, whose centre will be the individual always read to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle o villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integra units.

"Therefore, the outermost circumference will not wield powe to crush the inner circle, but will give strength to all within and wil derive its own strength from it. I may be taunted with the retor that this is all Utopian and, therefore, not worth a single though If Euclid's point, though incapable of being drawn by any huma agency, has an imperishable value, my picture has its own fo mankind to live. Let India live for this true picture, though neve realisable in its completeness. We must have a proper picture o what we want, before we can have something approaching it. I there ever is to be a republic of every village in India, then I clai verity for my picture, in which the last is equal to the first, or, i other words, no one is to be the first and none the last."

"We Do Not Learn From Villages Where India Lives"

Gandhiji again referred to villages in an editorial in th *Harijan* of October 20, 1946. It may be borne in mind that a provisional interim Government had been installed at the Centre wit Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru as Prime Minister and Congress Ministries had started functioning in the provinces after the genera elections in mid-1946. Writing under the heading "Real India Gandhiji said: "If my frequent wanderings throughout India o the villages have not deceived me, it can be confidently asserte that the 7,00,000 villages get and want no police protection. Th solitary patel to a village is a terrorist lording it over the villag and is designed for helping the petty revenue collector to collect revenue due to the *ma-bap*. I am not aware of the policeman having aided the villagers in protecting their goods or cattle against the depredations of man and beast. The police patel is not to be blamed for what he is. He has been chosen for his task which he does well. He has not been taught to regard himself as the servant of the people. The patel represents his master, the Viceroy. The change at the top has not yet permeated the most distant village. How can it? It has not come from the bottom.

"The relevance of all this writing is for showing, that we do not yet learn from the village in which India lives, that every Indian, man or woman, is his or her own policeman. This he or she can do only when neither harbours mischief against his or her neighbour, no matter what religion he professes or denies. If unfortunately the politically-minded person will not or cannot go as far as suggested here, he must at least shed all fear and resolutely deny himself all protection, whether from the military or the police. I am positive that India will not come into her own unless every home becomes its own castle, not in the sense of the ages known as dark but in the very ancient true sense that everyone has learnt the art of dying without ill-will, or even wishing that since he cannot, someone else will do away with the would-be assassin. How nice, therefore, it would be, if every one of us had this lesson burnt into us. There is much proof in support of the lesson, if we will take the trouble to examine the proof."

Panchayat Will Do What Violence Can Never Do

As 1946 was succeeded by the year 1947, it became apparent that the long-cherished freedom of India was near at hand, though the process of this rebirth was made terrible and painful due to communal frenzy. In a prayer meeting at Patna on May 18, he said : "Democracy required that everyone, man or woman, should realise his or her own responsibility. That was what was meant by Panchayat Raj."[1] A reference to Panchayat Raj occurs soon after in the *Harijan* of June 1, 1947. He was answering the following question :

"You say that a Raja, a zamindar or a capitalist should be a trustee for the poor. Do you think that any such exists today ? Or do you expect them to be so transformed?"

"I think that some very few exist even today, though not in the full sense of the term. They are certainly moving in that direction. It can, however, be asked whether the present Rajas and others can be expected to become trustees of the poor. If the do not become trustees of their own accord, force of circumstance will compel the reform unless they court utter destruction. Whe Panchayat Raj is established, public opinion will do what violenc can never do. The present power of the zamindars, the capitalist and the Rajas can hold sway only so long as the common peopl do not realise their own strength. If the people non-co-operat with the evil of zamindari or capitalism, it must die of inanition. I Panchayat Raj only the Panchayat will be obeyed and the Panchaya can only work through the law of their making."

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[1] Tendulkar's Mahatma, Vol. VII, p. 470.

India's Prime Minister Should Be A Kisan

A few months after, on November 26th, Mahatma Gandhi mad a plea for the kisans of India and said that in Panchayat Raj th man who should count most should be the kisan. He said : [1] "I was unfortunate that, today, none of the ministers were kisans. Th Sardar was born in a farmer's family and, though he knew something about agriculture, he had become a barrister by profession Their Prime Minister was a learned man, a great historian and great writer, but he knew nothing about agriculture and farming. The other ministers were all well-to-do men, who had neve worked on the land. Yet, more than eighty per cent of the India's population consisted of kisans. Only a kisan knew how t increase production and the fertility of the land. Only he could understand the whys and the wherefores of profiteering by the kisans and overcome the evil. In democracy, the kisan should be the ruler. The speaker would certainly like to push forward an honest and a capable kisan. Such a kisan would not know English. The speaker would ask Jawaharlal to be the kisan's secretary and see the foreign ambassadors on his chief's behalf, and to take pride in such service. Such a kisan Prime Minister would not ask for a palace to live in. He would live in a mud hut, sleep under the sky, and work on the land during the day, whenever he was free. Then the whole picture would change immediately. In Panchayat Raj, the man who should count most in India, was naturally the kisan. How to advance him was the question."

Gandhiji On Panchayat Functions (After Independence)

On December 27, 1947, Gandhiji addressed a prayer meeting at Sammalka village near New Delhi. The villagers had built a Panchayat Ghar and Gandhiji congratulated them on it. He said : [2] "Unless the villagers did the work of the Panchayats, the effort would be a waste of time and labour. Distinguished travellers from the world came to India in the days of yore from China and other countries. They came in quest of knowledge and put up with great hardships in travelling. They had reported that in India there was no theft, people were honest and industrious. They needed no locks for their doors. In those days there was no multiplicity of castes as at present. It was the function of the Panchayats to revive honesty and industry. If one asked them after one year, would they show a clean record and would they show that they had no court save their Panchayat? It was the function of the Panchayats to teach the villagers to avoid disputes, if they had to settle them. That would ensure speedy justice without any expenditure. They would need neither the police nor the military.

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[1] Tendulkar's Mahatma, Vol. VIII, p. 247.

[2] Harijan, January 4, 1948.

"Then the Panchayat should see to cattle improvement. They should show steady increase in the milk yield. Our cattle had become a burden on the land for want of care......The Panchayat should also see to an increase in the quantity of foodstuff grown in their village. That was to be accomplished by properly manuring the soil. The excreta of animals and human beings mixed with rubbish could be turned into valuable manure. This manure increased the fertility of the soil. Then they must see to the cleanliness of their village and its inhabitants. They must be clean and healthy in body and mind."

Twenty Men At Centre Cannot Work Democracy: It Must Be Worked From Below

Reference to Panchayats occurs again in Gandhiji's speech at the prayer meeting in New Delhi on January 6, 48. In a reference to Panchayats of Aundh State, he said,[1] "There was no law which could stop a Panchayat from functioning wherever the people wanted it. Aundh may cease to be a State, it would not cease to be a special group of villages named Aundh. Every such group or its member could have the Panchayat system whether the rest of India had it or not. True rights came as a result of duty done. No one could snatch away such rights. The Panchayat was there to serve the people. In the true democracy of India, the unit was the village. Even if one village wanted Panchayat Raj, which was called republic in English, no one could stop it. True democracy could not be worked by twenty men sitting at the Centre. It had to be worked from below by the people of every village."

Gandhiji's Reference To Panchayats In The Week Before His Martyrdom

Till his last moments, indeed, Gandhiji referred to Panchayats. In his speech on January 25, he said that[2] "The charter of India's independence as conceived by the Congress was based on village autonomy. But all the villages were to derive vitality from the Centre, as the Centre in its turn derived all power and authority from the villages." And on January 26th, the Republic Day, he said : [1] "What are we celebrating today? Surely not our disillusionment. We are entitled to celebrate the hope that the worst is over and that we are now on the road to showing the lowliest of the villager that it means his freedom from serfdom and that he is no longer a serf born to serve the cities and the towns of India, but that he is destined to exploit the city dwellers for the advertisement of the finished fruits of well thought-out labours, that he is the salt of the Indian earth, that it means also equality of all classes and creeds, never the domination and superiority of the major community over a minor, however insignificant it may be in number or influence. Let us not defer the hope and make the heart sick."

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[1] Harijan, January 18, 1948.

[2] Tendulkar's Mahatma, Vol. VIII, p. 337.

Gandhiji's Last Written Document Was On Panchayats

And, almost like a fitting climax to his life-long advocacy of the Panchayats, the very last document he signed, just before the tragic evening of January 30, 1948, was a constitution based on Panchayats. This, in effect, was a draft constitution for the Congress, whereby the Congress organisation was to be renovated under a Lok Sevak Sangh under the following rules[2] with powers to alter them :

"Every Panchayat of five adult men or women being villagers or village-minded, shall form a unit.

"Two such contiguous Panchayats shall form the working party, under a leader elected from among themselves.

"When there are a hundred such Panchayats, the fifty first grade leaders shall elect, from among themselves, one second grade leader and so on, the first grade leaders, in the meanwhile, working under the second grade leader. Parallel groups of two hundred Panchayats shall continue to be formed, till they cover the whole of India, each succeeding group of Panchayats electing a second grade leader, after the manner of the first. All the second grade leaders shall serve jointly for the whole of India, and severally for their respective areas. The second grade leaders may elect, whenever they deem necessary, from among themselves a chief who will, during pleasure, regulate and command all the groups."

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[1] Ibid, p. 338.

[2] Ibid, 342-343

For the workers of this organisation, Gandhiji laid down a programme of village work and uplift. These included, in Gandhiji's own words, the following :

"He shall come in personal contact with every villager within his jurisdiction.

"He shall enrol and train workers from amongst the villagers and keep a register of all these.

"He shall keep a record of his work from day to day.

"He shall organise the villages, so as to make them self-contained and self-supporting through their agriculture and handicrafts.

"He shall educate villagers in sanitation and hygiene, and take all measures for prevention of ill-health and disease among them."

CHAPTER X

PANCHAYATS AFTER INDEPENDENCE

"Villages have been the basic units of administration in India since ancient times. The importance which was attached to village organisations in pre-historic India is evident from Vedic and post-Vedic literature. Yet, if we lay emphasis today on putting Village Panchayats on a sound footing and galvanising them into live organisms of administration, the reason is not the high position given to them in the past, recent or ancient. We have taken up this idea of organising Village Panchayats and vesting in them most of the functions concerning the welfare of village people on its own merit."[1]

—DR. RAJENDRA PRASAD

(24-4-'55)

"The principle of a Panchayat was 'Panch Parameshwar,' i.e., 'God speaks through the Five,' which, in other words, means that a unanimous decision of the Panchayat was respected as the verdict of God. If three or four out of five gave one judgement and the others gave a different one, it could not be taken as the verdict of God. If it were not so, it would give rise to majority and minority distinctions. Therefore, the only way to achieve unity is to accept the principle of 'Panch Parameshwar,' 'God speaks through the Five,' to achieve the ideal of unanimous decision."[2]

—VINOBA

INDIA achieved its Independence on August 15, 1947. Soon after the Constituent Assembly started discussions on a Draft Constitution for new India. In these first drafts there was no mention of Village Panchayats. Principal Shriman Narayan of Wardha Commerce College brought it to the notice of Mahatma Gandhi.[3] He said: "The Constitution as foreshadowed makes no mention of the Village Panchayats being the foundation of progressive decentralisation in place of the old hunger for centralisation." In his reply Mahatma Gandhi said: "Principal Agarwal says that there is no mention or direction about Village Panchayats and decentralisation in the foreshadowed Constitution. It is certainly an omission calling for immediate attention if our independence is to reflect the people's voice. The greater the power of the Panchayats, the better for the people. Moreover, Panchayats to be effective and efficient, the level of people's education has to be considerably raised. I do not onceive the increase in the power of the people in military, but ı moral terms. Naturally, I swear by *Nai Talim* in this connecion."

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[1] From address at Bihar State Panchayat Parishad, Isri, 24-4-'55.

[2] From article entitled 'Gram-Raj', A.I.C.C. Economic Review, Village Panchayat Number, Vol. VI, Nos. 6-7, dated July 24, 1954

[3] Harijan, December 21, 1947.

rime Minister Nehru On The Need To Build Democracy rom Below

A few months later, on August 6, 1948, a Conference of Local Self-Government Ministers met in Delhi. It was attended by epresentatives and delegates from Madras, Bombay, West Bengal, Jttar Pradesh, East Punjab, Central Provinces (later Madhya Pradesh), Bihar, Assam, Orissa, Delhi, Coorg, Ajmer-Marwara, etc. naugurating this first Local Self-Government Ministers' Conference f free India, Prime Minister Shri Jawaharlal Nehru said that local elf-government was and must be the basis of any true system of emocracy. "People had got into the habit of thinking of demoracy at the top and not so much below. Democracy at the top ould not be a success unless it was built on this foundation from elow." Like Gandhiji, Shri Nehru also emphasised that for this lemocracy from below to succeed, education of the masses is essenial. He said: "Democracy will not be much of a success unless here is mass education in the country, because an uneducated opulace—I use the word uneducated in preference to illiterate—is o foundation for democracy. The people must understand the roblems to some extent before they can express their views. herefore, education is essential just as local self-government is ssential."[1]

anchayats In The Constituent Assembly: r. Ambedkar's Reference

The Draft Constitution for free India as finally settled by the rafting Committee set up by the Constituent Assembly was reased in February 1948, that is, after Mahatma Gandhi's death. It ontained no reference to Village Panchayats. This Draft was aturally discussed in the country and many points of view were xpressed. This Draft was formally placed before the Constituent ssembly on November 4, 1948, by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the Chairan of the Drafting Committee. Referring to a criticism against e Draft, that no part of it represented the ancient polity of India d that it should have been drafted on the ancient Hindu model ilt upon Village Panchayats and District Panchayats, Dr. mbedkar referred to the part of villages in the destiny of the untry as described by Metcalfe, who had said: "Dynasty after nasty tumbles down. Revolution succeeds revolution. Hindu, than, Moghal, Maratha, Sikh, English, all are masters in turn but the village communities remain the same. In times of troubl they arm and fortify themselves. A hostile army passes throug the country. The village communities collect their cattle withi their walls, and let the enemy pass unprovoked."

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[1] Free Press Journal, 7.8.'48.

Such was the part, Dr. Ambedkar argued, which the villag communities had played in the history of the country. "Knowin this," he asked, "what pride can one feel in them? That they hav survived through vicissitudes may be a fact. But mere surviva has no value. The question is on what plane they have survived Surely on a low selfish level. I hold that these village republic have been the ruination of India. I am, therefore, surprised tha those who condemn provincialism and communalism should come forward as champions of the village. What is the village but stink of localism and a den of ignorance, narrow-mindedness an communalism? I am glad that the Draft Constitution has discarded the village and adopted the individual as its unit."

All-Out Criticism Of Dr. Ambedkar's Views

Dr. Ambedkar's opening speech on the Draft Constitutio was hailed all round as a masterly performance, but his referenc to the villages was very much regretted. When on subsequent day the Constituent Assembly debated the Draft Constitution, speake after speaker expressed disapproval of Dr. Ambedkar's remarks Thus, Shri Arun Chandra Guha criticised Dr. Ambedkar's remark on Indian villages and recalled that Mahatma Gandhi's dream o the future Constitution of India was a pyramidal structure, ver broadbased. That base was the villages of India. He urged tha the Assembly should even now make an effort to get this done Shri T. Prakasam regretted that at one stroke Dr. Ambedkar ha condemned the Village Panchayats. He strongly urged that th Constitution must be so amended as to make it useful for the million of villagers for whose sake freedom had been won.

Shri K. Santhanam disagreed with the views of Dr. Ambedka on village policy. But for the villages, he said, India would hav been in chaos. He wanted some statutory provision for the recognition of Village Panchayats. Shri Shibbanlal Saxena urged tha the Draft Constitution must be so amended as to make provisio for the creation of Village Panchayats or Republics. He suggeste that the elections to the upper chamber must be made by thes village republics. The late Shri Muniswami Pillai was sorry tha no provision had been made to recognise village units in the Constitution, and urged that at least groups of villages should be recognised as self-governing institutions. Shri Gokulbhai Bhatt sai that a Constitution which gave no place to the Village Panchayat could not be suited to India.

The supporters of Village Panchayats received great strength from the views expressed by the great constitutional lawyer, the late Alladi Krishnaswamy Aiyer. While he paid tributes to Dr. Ambedkar for his lucid explanation of the Draft Constitution, he made it clear that he did not share his views on, and his general condemnation of, village communities in India. He said that the Constitution did not give sufficient importance to village communities which were an essential feature of India's social and political life. With large powers vested in the Provincial and State Legislatures in regard to local self-government and other matters, there was nothing to prevent them from constituting the village as administrative units for the discharge of various functions.

Prof. N. G. Ranga said he was very unhappy that Dr. Ambedkar had spoken in the manner he did about Indian Village Panchayats Had he studied the history of India with half the care that he had devoted to the study of histories of other countries, he would not have spoken like that. He said that villages or groups of villages must be recognised in the Constitution so that the villagers would be trained to discharge their responsibility under democracy. Prof. Ranga warned that too much of centralisation would result in totalitarianism and Sovietisation, instead of leading the country to democracy. Shri Ananthasayanam Iyenger thought Dr. Ambedkar could have spared raising a controversy on Village Panchayats in the Constituent Assembly. He wished that the Constitution should be based upon autonomous village republics. As it was, the people in the villages had absolutely no opportunity to train themselves in democracy.

National Press Upholds The Cause Of Panchayats

In short, the Constituent Assembly did not approve of Dr. Ambedkar's summary dismissal of the village institution in Indian history and polity, and left no doubt about its strong opinion that Village Panchayats must find a place in the Constitution. Public opinion in the country also expressed itself in no unmistakable terms. In its editorial of November 6, 1948, *National Herald* emphatically said: "We disagree with Dr. Ambedkar on the inhabited view he has taken of our ancient polity in the light of a quotation from Metcalfe." In its editorial of November 10, 1948, the *Amrit Bazar Patrika* quoted the late Sardar Patel from a speech delivered a few days earlier at Mahadev Bhavan, Sevagram, where he had said: "When Bapu came to India, work was being done in a different way. Bapu said that real India was in the villages. Crores live in India and their interest must command our attention." And the *Patrika* posed the direct question: "Does the Draft Constitution......represent and embody the Swaraj of Mahatma Gandhi's dream?" And it answered that "the village or the village community does not figure much in the Draft Constitution is an admitted fact." The *Patrika* added: "If the village is and is allowed to remain 'a stink of localism and a den of ignorance, narrow-mindedness and communalism', what chance is there of India ever achieving greatness and prosperity? For without a doubt the real India lives in villages. Gandhiji built his struggle on four walls, the four walls being untouchability, self-sufficiency, Hindu-Muslim unity and national education. All these walls were intended to rid the village communties of the chronic ills they were heir to, to pour new life and vigour into them and to save them from exploitation The Swaraj that we have won through Mahatma Gandhi's austerities will be worth little if it leaves the villages where they are immersed in poverty, ignorance and indebtedness." And the *Patrika* said challengingly: "If the new Constitution fails to bring the fruits of swaraj to the villages, it will not be worth the paper written on. Indeed, Congressmen will judge the Constitution by this criterion—what scope it provides for the improvement of village polity."

Indeed, the entire Indian Press, and more so the language Press, reacted strongly to Dr. Ambedkar's strictures on Village Panchayats. The reactions of other sections were no less pronounced. The South Indian author, Shri K. S. Venkataramani thought it a "tragic pity that a thinker and scholar of Dr. Ambedkar's eminence should so openly belittle the survival value of the Indian villages," and demanded "the creation and recognition of a rura unit as the base of the new Constitution of India, as an integra unit of administration with effective power."

The Triumph Of Panchayats: The Directive Principles Of Our Constitution

We will not prolong this account by further references. Suffic it to say that the countrywide repercussions to Dr. Ambedkar's remarks on Village Panchayats, as also the reactions inside the Constituent Assembly itself, at last succeeded in their objective. Th Constituent Assembly started the discussion of Directive Principle of State Policy on November 19, 1948. On November 22, Shri K Santhanam proposed the addition of a new Article declaring tha the State should organise Village Panchayats and endow them wit such powers as might be necessary to enable them to function a units of self-government. Shri Santhanam said that the amendment was based on the view which was shared by everyone in th House An amendment with the same general object in view wa moved earlier by Shri H. V. Kamath. Supporting Shri Santhanam' amendment, Shri T. Prakasam said that if village republics were properly organised and if they functioned properly as self-sufficient, self-governing units, they would help bring down inflationary trends and put the biggest check on black-markets and profiteering. Shri Surendra Mohan Ghosh said that villages in the past had maintained and preserved the unity of India. Seth Govind Das, after pointing out that villages had always been recognised as distinct entities in India, said they fell into obscurity only during the British regime. Dr. Ambedkar accepted the amendment.

And so in the Constitution of India as in force, Article 40, in Part IV, under the heading Directive Principles of State Policy reads: "The State shall take steps to organise Village Panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government." In the Indian Constitution, the Fundamental Rights are followed by these Directive Principles. It is a novel feature in Constitutions framed for parliamentary democracy. The only other Constitution embodying such principles is that of the Irish Free State. These Directive Principles are meant to be the guiding factors in the policies of the State in Republican India. Under the alien rulers, Instruments of Instructions were issued to the Governor-General, and they were meant to secure the foreign stranglehold over our land. These Directive Principles in the Indian Constitution, issued to the legislatures and the executive, secure the sovereignty of the people and ensure good government in the interests of the people. The Indian Constitution, while leaving it to the people to determine which particular party should be in power, directs that whoever captures power must respect these Directive Principles. In commending these Principles, Dr. Ambedkar said: "Whoever captures power......cannot ignore them. He may not have to answer for their breach in a court of law. But he will certainly have to answer for them before the electorate at election time. What great value these Directive Principles possess will be realised better when forces of right contrive to capture power."

The incorporation of the Panchayat idea in the Indian Constitution was an event of profound importance pregnant with great and far-reaching consequences on the very structure of the State. The decision was hailed all over the country. As an objective it involved recognition of a principle to which till then only lip service had been paid and on which the pure constitutional pedant still had many doubts. It is noteworthy that even Dr. Ambedkar, while condemning the village communities for their conservatism and ignorance, could not deny them the virtue of stability, and stability combined with real social and economic progress will mean that the vagaries of parliamentary democracy will be under a brake. Way

was opened for the Village Panchayats to become a useful foc
economic organisation which ultimately would be the solve
social malaise.

U. P.s' Great Experiment: Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant On Panchayats

The Constituent Assembly decision no doubt gave impe
the organisation of Panchayats in different States, but
before this Constitutional direction, many State Government
independently taken steps to enact Panchayat legislations.
Congress Governments, indeed, by virtue of all the past h
of the Organisation, and educated as Congressmen were on the
ings and principles of Mahatma Gandhi, were committed to a
of reviving the Panchayat institution. The Government of
Pradesh was the first to pass a comprehensive legislation as
as 1947, which, in fact, became the model for Panchayat le
tions of many other States. As a matter of fact, the villages of
Pradesh elected their Panchayats on the basis of the 1947 A
early 1948, many months before the decision of the Const
Assembly. Addressing a kisan rally at village Tindola in
banki district on January 22, 1948, Pandit Govind Ballabh
then U.P.'s Chief Minister, advised kisans to be self-reliant and
lop healthy body and mind. He emphasised that they must
themselves and educate their children. They should root out
from their society and strive on a co-operative basis to improve
life and method of cultivation. Emphasising the role of Panch
in these tasks he said: "Panchayats will be formed in villa
about two months and you should elect your best men to t
The Panchayat elections in U.P. were hailed as the larges
experiment in decentralised democracy, full of many useful le
for the administrator, as also the social scientist. And the
Government persisted in its efforts to make the experiment a
cess. The steadfast determination of the Government was expr
by Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant in no uncertain terms. Ad
ing a Conference of Chairmen of District Development Associ
in Lucknow in the first week of November 1948, he said:
struggled for freedom of our country and won it under Ma
Gandhi's leadership. We have now to bring the fruits of fre
to the masses. We have to develop village life as fast as po
in order to raise the economic, educational and intellectual stan
of the people."[1]

Panchayat Development In The States

The Bombay Government had also taken steps, even
the Constituent Assembly decision, to amend the Bombay V

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[1] National Herald, 24.1.'48.

nchayat Act. Bombay's Minister for Local Self-Government,
ri Vartak, thus explained the object of the step:[1] "Mahatma
ndhi had fully visualised the importance of Village Panchayats
free India, and it is from him that the Bombay Government
rived inspiration to amend the Bombay Village Panchayat Act
th a view to vitalising these Panchayats and giving them sufficient
wer and financial help so that these would be able to look after
interests of the villagers of Bombay Province."

In subsequent years, all the State Governments, with few ex-
ptions, enacted Panchayat legislations, and Village Panchayats,
beit with all the defects and imperfections natural in this experi
ent of a novel type, began to spring up in villages all over India.
was a silent phenomenon which did not receive much attention
the daily press, did not strike the headlines, but nevertheless
rsisted. And, what is a matter of gratification, the Panchayats
ntinually received the attention of the leaders and the Govern-
ent everywhere. Thus, addressing a training camp of village
lunteers at Rajgir on March 12, 1950, Bihar's Chief Minister, Dr.
ikrishna Sinha, said: "Gram Panchayat was the ideal govern-
ent as conceived by Gandhiji. It was based on love and service
which villagers themselves would solve their problems of im-
oved agriculture, communication and sanitation." He exhorted
volunteers to go into villages as messengers of love and service,
ng back plenty and banish poverty from the countryside.

In Madras State, where the British carried on their experiments
Panchayat organisation more than anywhere else, a comprehen-
e Village Panchayats Bill was introduced in the State Assembly
1947. While the Bill was being debated in the Assembly, the
vernor of the State, Maharaja of Bhavanagar, addressing the
lagers of Upakshi, near Hindupur, on July 22, said: "It is the
ty of every Panchayat to see that its responsibilities are dis-
arged properly, without allowing the spirit of faction to creep
o it." He said that the proposed Bill was of far-reaching im-
tance and will enable the Panchayats to undertake nation-build-
activities on a large scale. And he added: "I would like to
ess here the fact that the successful working of these measures
l depend primarily on our Panchayats themselves." He re-
nded his listeners that "a Panchayat functions in such a way and
such a manner, that it touches directly on the daily activities
our village population." After warning the villagers that if
tional spirit creeps in the Panchayats, it will completely destroy
the good intentions, he expressed the confidence that "A Pan-

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[1] Speech at Dahanu on July 25, 1948; Free Press Journal, 27.7.'48.

chayat which realises its responsibilities can do a great deal to provide for the better life of the villagers."[1]

An idea of the number of Panchayats functioning in some of the States during 1950-51 and 1951-52 will be had from the following table : [2]

TABLE 16

States	Number of Panchayats 1950-51	1951-52
Bihar	762	1,119
Bombay	3,825	N.A.
Madras	481 (a)	N.A.
Orissa	532	N.A.
Punjab	6,244	6,765
U.P.	39,919	N.A.
Hyderabad	442	1,012
Jammu & Kashmir (b) ..	697	672
Mysore	12,498	N.A.
P.E.P.S.U.	424	374
Rajasthan	2,475	N.A.
Saurashtra	401	839
Travancore-Cochin	280	550
Bilaspur	N.A.	400
Coorg	4	4
Delhi	13	N.A.
Himachal Pradesh	153	129

N.A.= Not Available
(a) = Major Panchayats
(b) = Figures relate to Samwat 2,006 & 2,007 respectively.

This new and unprecedented development of the Panchayat institution in India brought in its train many problems of their organisation and functioning, and the existence of factions in the village. to which the Madras Governor, Maharaja of Bhavnagar referred, came to be regarded as the biggest impediment in the way of its success. Very rightly did Shri Morarji Desai advise Village Panchayats in 1952 to "banish internal disputes so as to be able to wield wide powers." He was replying to an address of welcome presented by the Village Panchayat of Sabarmati, where Mahatma Gandhi had lived for a number of years, and he reminded the people that "it was the conception of Mahatma Gandhi to make Village Panchayats the basis of national government. We have accepted this ideal and we shall enforce it as Village Panchayats become the pivot of national life."[1]

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[1] **Hindu, 26.7.'50.**

[2] **Agricultural Legislation in India, Vol. V, Village Panchayats, published by the** Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of India, Delhi, 1954; **Introduction, p. iii.**

Village Panchayats: A Review Of Their Position In March 1954

By March 1954, all Part 'A' States except West Bengal, all Part 'B' States, and Ajmer, Bhopal, Coorg, Himachal Pradesh, Kutch and Vindhya Pradesh had enacted Panchayat legislations. West Bengal was considering the draft of a Bill and had set up some Panchayats under executive orders. Delhi State was also then preparing a Panchayat Raj Bill. In all, out of 5,81,184 villages, 2,94,460 villages had been covered by Panchayats. The total number of Panchayats set up in the country by March 1954 was 98,256. We give below a summary[2] of the position of Panchayats in the different States of India at this time with a view to giving the reader an overall picture. A summarised account[3] of the Panchayat position at this time is important from another point of view. Soon after, the Congress Working Committee, as also the Central Government, took some very important steps for the advancement of Village Panchayats. A knowledge of the advance made by Panchayats all over India before these steps were taken would help a better appreciation of subsequent developments.

Generally speaking, the State Government had by 1953 end created a separate Department of Gram Panchayats, attached generally to the Department of Local Self-Government. Bihar, Punjab, U.P., Hyderabad, Pepsu, Rajasthan and Travancore-Cochin had this arrangement. In U.P., the Development Commissioner was the ex-officio Director of Panchayats. In Madras and Andhra, however, the Inspector of Municipal Councils and Local Boards working under the department of Health, Education and Local Administration, controlled and supervised the Panchayats. In Mysore, the Commissioner of Local Self-Government was the chief controlling authority for the Panchayats. In Madhya Pradesh, the Director of Social Welfare dealt with Panchayats in addition to Social Welfare, Social Education, Rural Home Guards and Promotion of Co-operatives. In Madhya Bharat, Vindhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh, Co-operatives and Panchayat Departments had been combined. In Bombay, there was no separate department for Panchayats. The administration of Panchayats at the State level was the responsibility of Local Self-Government and Public Health Department.

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[1] **Free Press Journal, 4.3.'55.**

[2] Based upon reply given in Parliament to Starred Question No. 919, on 11th March, 1954.

[3] Detailed description of the Panchayat Organisation in the States would be found in Book II.

In Assam, Rural Development Department was responsible for P
chayats. In Orissa, a member of the Board of Revenue (deal
with Commercial Taxes) dealt with the Panchayat organisat
with the help of a special officer. Saurashtra had set up a Gr
Panchayat Madhyastha Mandal, a statutory body consisting of
Minister in charge of Rural Development as President, the M.L.
five District Collectors and seven public workers interested in P
chayat activities, the Chief Secretary, the Secretary in charge
Rural Development Department, with the Chief Panchayat Office
the Secretary. This Mandal had the task of promoting the org
sation and effective functioning of Panchayats. It had power
appoint staff including the Chief Panchayat Officer, frame and rec
mend rules for the Government's approval, administer rules, fr
rules under some clauses of the Saurashtra Gram Panchayat Or
ance, recommend supercession of Panchayat, watch and report
the progress of Panchayats, etc.

Generally speaking, the main functions of the organisatio
the State level is to administer the State Panchayat Raj Act, arra
for the formation of Panchayats, control the expenditure of Pan
yats, and control and supervise the work of field staff and arrange
the training of Panchayat staff. In some States, the Departm
has also the responsibility for distribution of grants to Pancha
and for administering self-help activities. In Travancore-Coc
the Director of Panchayats also supervises public works taken
for execution from the Panchayat fund and Government grant

Each State has a field staff, generally at the district level,
sometimes also at the Divisional and Sub-Divisional, Tehsil or Po
Station level. Except in Mysore, PEPSU (in some cases), Trav
core-Cochin and Coorg, the Panchayats in the rest of the States
generally served by full-time or part-time Panchayat Secreta
In Hyderabad and in some Mysore Panchayats, Panchayat Se
taries are honorary. Generally almost everywhere, the Colle
supervises the work of Panchayat staff, though rather distantly

The Bombay Government made provision in the current bu
for allotting 15% of land revenue or 25% of Local Fund Cess, w
ever is higher, to the Panchayats. In Madras, 3⅛% of land reve
in Punjab 10%, in Hyderabad 15%, in Madhya Bharat 3⅛%,
Mysore 12½%, in PEPSU 10%, in Saurashtra from 20% to 33%
Kutch 15% of land revenue was allotted to the Panchayats.

The U.P. Government gives a grant to cover the pay of P
chayat Secretaries. In Bombay, the Government pays ¾th of
salaries and allowances of the Secretaries. The Madras Gov
ment gives dearness allowance subsidy for the establishmen
Panchayats. In Orissa, the Government gives a grant for the m

nance and sanitation staff. The Governments of Bihar and Vindhya radesh also provide for the pay of the Panchayat Secretaries. The imachal Pradesh Government also proposes to pay for the part-me allowance for Gram as well as Nyaya Panchayats. In ombay, the Government also provides for 50% of dearness allownces to the staff other than Secretaries of Panchayats.

The Government of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, U.P., Rajasian, Vindhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh make small initial on-recurring grants (ranging from Rs. 50 to Rs. 200) for the setting p of Panchayats mainly for stationery or furniture. The Governient of Travancore-Cochin decided to allow Rs. 500 as initial grant its new Panchayats. The Governments of Andhra and Madras so give grants (a) for village communications (one half, 3|4th or ie full grant, depending on the finances of the Panchayats), (b) or covering school teachers' pays, (c) for school building (Rs. 450 r thatched and Rs. 1,500 for terraced building). The Madras overnment also gives surcharge on stamp duty on transfers of proerty, as well as grant for entertainment taxes to the Panchayats. Orissa, the Government gives grants for maintenance of roads id execution of village development work. The Government of unjab gives grant for the libraries, as well as for sanitation (on a atching basis). The U.P. Government gives self-help grants. In ajasthan, the Government gives grant for public utility works, r Panchayat-ghars, maintenance of libraries, reading rooms, hting, sanitation and repairs of *khuddas* and roads. The Himaal Pradesh Government proposes to allot grants for library, educaon, sports, and prizes for recognition of conspicuous work. The har Government also gives grant for specific purposes. The issa Government gives *Kenduleat* grant to a certain area. The overnments of Hyderabad, Madhya Bharat, Vindhya Pradesh, iopal and Coorg also give grants-in-aid for various purposes.

The Government of Travancore-Cochin had decided to conbute to the Panchayat fund a sum equal to the amount collected the Panchayats during a particular year by levying taxes, etc., bject to a maximum of Rs. 2,000.

Assam is a case by itself. In Assam, a rural Panchayat covers out 14,000 population and has on an average five Primary Paniyats under its control. Each Panchayat is given a subsidy of . 55,000 over a period of five years by the Government. The itter was, however, being reconsidered by the Assam Government.

The Government also gives compensatory grant in lieu of al rates as well as grants for rural communication, rural water pply, and for self-help work.

The Panchayat Secretaries in Assam are trained at the Rura Polytechnique at the cost of Panchayats. The Bihar Governmen organises training camps at divisional headquarters. The Government of Madhya Bharat has set up a regular training school fo training Panchayat Secretaries. In PEPSU, training to Panchaya Secretaries is given at the Co-operative Training Institute. The Saurashtra Government has set up a Gram Karyakar Vidyalaya a Junagadh, while Himachal Pradesh Government has established a joint training school for Co-operative and Panchayat staff. In Bombay, the Panchayat Secretaries are trained in the District Board Office. Madhya Pradesh and Orissa Governments were examining this matter. In Punjab, the Secretaries are trained by the educational staff of the Panchayat Department. In Madras and Andhra, a course of six weeks' training is given to the executive officers of the Panchayats. In U.P., Panchayat Secretaries are attached for a fortnight to other Panchayat Secretaries for training. They are also generally being trained in the Extension Blocks. Bhopal was also making arrangements for the training of Panchayat Secretaries.

Table 17 (on pages 270-271) will indicate the progress made in establishing Panchayats in the different States of India by the end of March 1954.

Congress Working Committee Reviews Progress Of Panchayats

The organisation of Village Panchayats as units of self-government in nearly fifty per cent of the villages of India within just 6 years of the Directive of the Constitution was hailed all over as a magnificent success. No doubt, there were any amount of complaints as well regarding the functions of the village bodies, and in the local language press of almost all areas the activities of Panchayats were featured, suggestions advanced and the problems discussed. It is true that the English language national press of India did not give much thought or attention to this silent process going on in Indian villages, and to that extent the Village Panchayat problems were not highlighted. The Congress leadership, however, was quick to realise the significance of the great change and reacted in a befitting manner. All its meeting in New Delhi on the 23rd and 24th of May, 1954, the Congress Working Committee adopted the following resolution :

"The Working Committee have noted with appreciation the progressive introduction of the Panchayat system in various parts of India. This is not only in keeping with the ancient tradition of India, but is suited to present day conditions. A modern State tends inevitably to become more and more centralised. This tendency should be balanced by the growth of local self-governing institutions, so that the mass of the people should themselves participate in this business of administration and in other aspects of community life, social, economic and judicial. This can best be done by the development of Panchayats in the villages of India. These Panchayats should have an administrative functioning as well as a judicial function.

"The Committee particularly welcome the establishment of Nyaya or judicial Panchayats which should reduce the burden on the regular courts and make justice available on the spot in a considerable number of relatively petty matters and thus make it both speedy and inexpensive.

"Such Panchayats should be developed throughout the country in accordance with local conditions and traditions, and represent the entire community in the area concerned, irrespective of caste or creed.

"In view of the importance of this subject, the Working Committee appoint a Committee consisting of :

1. Dr. Kailas Nath Katju,
2. Shri Jagjiwan Ram,
3. Shri Gulzarilal Nanda,
4. Giani Gurumukh Singh Musafir,
5. Shri Keshava Deva Malaviya, and
6. Shri Shriman Narayan (Convener)

to consider this question in all its aspects, including reports of the working of the Panchayats in various States, and report to the next meeting of the Working Committee which is going to be held prior to the Ajmer Session of the A.I.C.C."

Issues Framed By The Congress Village Panchayat Committee

Following the appointment of this high-level committee, its convener issued a comprehensive questionnaire[1] on Panchayats on May 25, 1954. It was sent to about 1,000 addresses, among them the Chief Ministers of all States, Presidents of all Pradesh Congress Committees, nearly 500 District Congress Committees, and a number of individuals and institutions. The publication of the questionnaire in the daily press aroused considerable interest in India as a whole, and there were many demands for it from the A.I.C.C. headquarters. The Committee received replies to the questionnaire from almost all the State Governments,

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[1] See Report of the Congress Village Panchayat Committee, Op. cit., Appendix A.

TABLE

Name of the State.	Total No. of Villages.	No. of Panchayats established upto March 1951.
1	2	3
Andhra	15,500	3,753
Assam	25,327	28 Rural Panchayats 135 Primary
Bihar	71,378	1,424
Bombay	34,227	3,825
Madhya Pradesh	48,471	5,159
Madras	19,703	4,386
Orissa	48,398	532
Punjab	16,455	6,244(a)
Uttar Pradesh	1,24,323	35,919
West Bengal	35,603	can't be furnished

PART 'B' STATES

Name of the State.	Total No. of Villages.	No. of Panchayats established upto March 1951.
Hyderabad	21,497	440
Madhya Bharat	21,899	4,087
Mysore	16,439	12,606
Pepsu	5,118	None under the new Act
Rajasthan	32,040	2,475
Saurashtra	4,438	400
Travancore-Cochin	711	278
Jammu & Kashmir	8,740 (1941 Census)	540

PART 'C' STATES

Name of the State.	Total No. of Villages.	No. of Panchayats established upto March 1951.
Ajmer	No Panchayat Act is in force in the State	
Bhopal	2,919	572 (established in 1947)
Coorg	297	3
Delhi	360	..
Himachal Pradesh	14,126	315(f)
Kutch	964	Nil
Manipur	No Panchayats Act.	
Tripura	No Panchayats constituted.	
Vindhya Pradesh	12,881	Nil
	5,81,814	83,093

50,61% villages covere

(a) Under the old Panchayat Act. (b) Under the 1952 Punjab Gram Panchayat Act, (c) Covered by Panchayats act up by executive order of Government, Panchayat legislation not yet enacted. (d) Under the Panchayat Act 15% of land revenue allotted

17

No. of Panchayats established upto March 1954.	No. of Villages covered by Panchayats by March 1954.	Programme for setting up of Panchayats upto March 1956.
4	5	6
3,753	4,168	1,539 Panchayats will be constituted.
94 Rural Panchayats 470 Primary "	3,620	Under consideration.
4,387	22,000	9,100 Panchayats will be constituted.
51,804 upto Dec. '53 Upto Mar. '54 not available.	6,033(a)	Declared policy of the State to establish Village Panchayats in every village.
6,866	7,000	All Villages with population between 500 to 1,600 will be covered.
4,502	7,000	2,000 Panchayats are expected to be constituted.
1,479	28,427	It is proposed to have intensive Panchayats in whole of the State by the end of March 1956.
9,180(b)	16,000	Entire area covered.
36,139	1,24,323	Entire rural area has been covered.
273(c)	650(c)	
PART 'B' STATES		
580(d) 100*	1,020	No specific programme due to lack of finance.
4,111 Gram Panchayats 223 Kendra " 223 Nyaya " 16 Mandal "	21,899	No programme necessary since every village covered.
12,603	16,439	Does not arise.
1,407 Nagar Panchayats 312 Adalati "	4,474	Every village will be covered.
2,967	19,946	Within the next 6 months all the villages which have no Municipal Board will be covered by Panchayats.
1,644	1,728	3,000 Panchayats will be established.
550	711	Panchayats have started functioning from May 1953 under the Act of 1950. Steps in progress for implementing the various provisions of the Act.
751	4,774	To establish one Panchayat in each Patwar.
PART 'C' STATES		
273(e)	..	534 Village Panchayats upto January 1955 will be covered.
Nil	3	No definite programme.
74(g)	203	State Govt. is preparing a new Bill. 428 Gram Panchayats, 100 Nyaya Panchayats will be set up.
10	10	About 40 Panchayats will be set up.
606	4,032	1,200 Panchayats will be established
98,256	2,94,460	

by Panchayats.

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to Panchayats. Due to lack of finances, Hyderabad Government opens Panchayats only where village agrees to run without this aid. * These 100 Panchayats are not getting this aid. (e) Established after 1-4-1954. (f) Under the old Act. (g) Under the old Act and many Pradesh and District Congress Committees and a n of individuals and institutions. Soon after the Committee discuss the replies to the Questionnaire and formulated issu decision. The issues framed were as follows :

I. *Some Fundamental Aspects :*

(i) Role of Village Panchayats as effective instrum a peaceful socio-economic revolution.

(ii) Village Panchayats for bringing about far-re decentralisation of social and economic power f establishment of a Welfare State.

(iii) Village Panchayats as a model of 'composite demo in accordance with ancient Indian traditions—th ception of *"Panch Parameshwar"*.

(iv) Village Panchayats as community organisation from party affiliations.

(v) The need for unanimity in the working of Villag chayats—Panchayats elected unanimously to have powers than those where elections have not unanimous.

(vi) System of elections to Panchayat—Adult Franc Direct or Indirect election—secret ballot or sh hands—developing the system of drawing lots ancient India.

(vii) Unit of Panchayat organisation—a village or a thereof, or population basis.

(viii) Intermediate units between the Panchayat an State.

(ix) Role of Village Panchayats in National Eco Planning—how to ensure their effective participat the formulation of the Second Five-Year Plan- importance in relation to Community Projects an National Extension Service.

II. *Problems of day-to-day functioning of Village Panchaya*

(i) Administrative or municipal functions.

(ii) Judicial functions—composition of judicial or Panchayats—ensuring freedom of Nyaya Panc decisons from village factions.

(iii) Economic functions, specially in relation to operatives in the village and development c operative marketing and purchase, and co-ope farming.

(iv) Sources of revenue of Panchayats—percentage collections of land revenue—from management of mon lands, *hats,* bazars, mela grounds, ferries, etc.,—contributions in cash, kind and labour.

(v) Training of workers.

ommendations Of The Congress Village chayat Committee

In the course of its discussions, the Committee invited i C. D. Deshmukh, Union Minister for Finance, Shri V. T. shnamachari, Deputy Chairman, National Planning Commission, i Mohan Lal Gautam, then Minister for Local Self-Government in ar Pradesh, and others. The Report was signed on July 19, 4. A summary of its recommendations is given below:

1. The Panchayat system provides a sound basis for the estab- nent of healthy democratic traditions in India. Its develop- t should be encouraged and fostered by the State to enable the ses of our people to participate in the business of administra- and other aspects of community life, social, economic, and cial.

2. For the achievement of the objectives laid down in the stitution, the Village Panchayats should serve not only as units ocal Self-Government, but also as effective institutions for secur- social justice and fostering corporate life resulting in fuller loyment.

3. The basic principles underlying the Constitution can be quately fulfilled if a serious and systematic attempt is made to g about decentralisation of economic and political power through institution of Village Panchayats.

4. The introduction of far-reaching land reforms has resulted ne removal of the system of intermediaries who formerly were orming some essential functions in the village society like credit, keting, supplies, etc. The State should now try to provide these ices through the promotion of Village Panchayats.

5. Village Panchayats should develop a type of democracy ugh which will evolve a leadership representing all elements of ge life to conduct the affairs of the community.

6. The success of Village Panchayats will depend on the usiasm that they create and the feeling of oneness that they rate in the village community, and the confidence they enjoy l sections of the village population. It is, therefore, necessary ep the Panchayats, as far as possible, away from party politics.

7. Great importance should be attached to the need of unani- in the elections of Village Panchayats. With a view to uraging unanimity, it may be desirable to give more

authority and power to those Panchayats which elect their Panch
unanimously.

8. While deviations from the above basic concepts should
avoided as far as possible, it must be borne in mind that for t
day-to-day functioning of the Panchayats no rigidity can be mai
tained in the country as a whole, and it should be left to the Stat
to evolve their pattern of Village Panchayats in accordance wi
local traditions, conditions and requirements.

9. Elections of the Village Panchayats should be on the bas
of adult franchise. All the adults of the village should constitute
Gaon Sabha. Where this number is too large, representatives fro
each family of the village may form the Gaon Sabha. The Villa
Panchayat elected by the Gaon Sabha will be in the nature of i
executive. The strength of the Village Panchayat will depend
the population of the village. It should generally be a multip
of five. There should be reservation of seats for the schedul
castes and tribes proportionate to their population.

10. The system of election of the Village Panchayats should
as simple as possible. There will be no difficulty in those Panchaya
where elections happen to be unanimous. Where there is no u
animity for all the members, elections may take place throug
secret vote. This procedure also can be simplified by the use
village pots or tin canisters. If necessary, the election officer ma
be allowed to register the votes of the members of the Gaon Sabh
secretly in a separate room. The Committee would not, howeve
like to rule out completely the system of elections by show of han
in a village where the Gaon Sabha is agreeable to such a procedur

11. The unit of Village Panchayat organisation should
generally on the basis of one village up to a population rangi
from 1,500 to 2,000. Only such Panchayats will be able to wo
and plan on the basis of the felt needs of the community. Cond
tions, however, differ from State to State, and it is not possible
be rigid in this matter. Wherever necessary, a few small villag
could be combined into one Village Panchayat.

12. It would be helpful to have some form of a superviso
body to regulate and co-ordinate the activities of the Panchayat
and these supervisory bodies may also have some executive fun
tions. Such bodies may preferably be set at the sub-divisional leve
though their existence at the district level or other convenient leve
is not ruled out. Such supervisory bodies should not be nominate
but should be indirectly elected by Sarpanches. Some technic
experts may be associated with its work without the right to vot

13. The Panchayats should have different functions-
municipal, social, economic, judicial, etc. The municipal functio

hould include sanitation, village roads, construction and mainten-
nce of community buildings, drainage, provision for drinking
vater, street lighting, etc. Education may be entrusted to the
anchayats in case they are not being looked after by the District
oards. In such cases, the educational functions of the Panchayats
hould be under the supervision of the Education Department of
he State. In addition to certain compulsory municipal functions,
here may be some discretionary functions also which the State
overnments may entrust to the Village Panchayats in accordance
vith their efficiency of working.

14. The composition and functions of the judicial or Adalati
anchayats should be separate from the Village Panchayats. Each
udicial Panchayat should serve a few villages covering a popula-
ion of about 5 to 6 thousand in a radius of, say, 3 miles. Each
aon Sabha should elect along with their representatives for the
illage Panchayat, a panel of 5 members to work on the judicial
anchayat. On this basis the judicial Panchayat should consist of
bout 30 such members elected from a few villages. Cases should
e tried by a bench of five out of the members of the judicial
anchayats by a system of rotation. The cases should be heard and
isposed of in the village, to which the particular case belongs, and
he whole legal procedure should be completed in one sitting in
rder to avoid unnecessary delays. The atmosphere of these judicial
anchayats should be free from the existing atmosphere of courts
order to render village justice simple, cheap and expeditious. No
wyers should be permitted to appear in these judicial Panchayats.
n each judicial panel of five elected by the Village Panchayat,
here should be at least one Harijan and one woman.

15. Planning in India can be successful and achieve its objec-
ves only if it is based upon our villages. In this the Village
anchayats will have to play a vital role. For this purpose the
evelopment Councils envisaged in the Five-Year Plan should be
oven around the Village Panchayats. This would help in creat-
g a permanent kind of leadership in the village and would be able
cover all aspects of rural development. The Community Project
d National Extension Service officers and the village-level workers
ould actively help in the evolution and growth of Village Pan-
ayats so that they may be equipped to shoulder an ever-growing
sponsibility for the implementation of the National Plan in their
ea.

16. Special provision should be made for the training of
orkers, to make them fully competent to take up development
orks in all their technicalities. This would create opportunities
unemployed youngmen. Attempt should be made to enlist the

co-operation of non-official agencies like the Sarva Seva Sangh, th Gandhi National Memorial Trust and the Kasturba Gandhi Nationa Memorial Trust for such work.

17. The Panchayats should be increasingly assigned the tas of revenue collection and 15 to 25 per cent of the collections shoul be allotted to them for their day-to-day functioning. The Panchayat should also be empowered to levy a labour tax. But, as far as pos sible, efforts should be made to get voluntary contributions in th form of *Shramdan*. In case an individual is not prepared to wor in lieu of the labour tax, he should be asked to contribute in cas twice the amount of labour work. The management of commo lands of the village can be a third source of income for the Villag Panchayats. When a Panchayat has successfully worked for som time, then alone it may be permitted to impose taxes under th following heads :

1. Tax on landholdings;
2. Vehicles Tax;
3. Profession Tax;
4. Tax on tea shops, etc.; and
5. Revenue from management of *hats,* bazars, mela ground etc.

Under the existing circumstances, State aid is absolutely esser tial to enable the Panchayats to carry on their work properly.

18. Functions and organisation of the Co-operatives an Village Panchayats must be kept separate from each other for variety of reasons, e.g., scope of Co-operatives is wider than th Village Panchayats, it is optional and not compulsory like the latte etc. Village Panchayats, however, must mobilise support for th growth of Co-operatives, which in their turn should periodicall report their progress to the Panchayats.

The *Report of the Congress Village Panchayat Committe* stimulated thinking on the subject all over India, and, like th *Report of the Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee* of 1948 i regard to land reforms, has influenced and is influencing all thinl ing and legislations on the question of Village Panchayats.

Local Self-Government Ministers Conference, (Simla 1954)

About the same time, in June 1954, the Union Health Ministe Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur, rendered great service to the cause Village Panchayats by convening a Conference of Local Self-Go ernment Ministers of all States. This Conference met at Simla

June 25, 26 and 27. Representatives of the Planning Commission, Local Self-Government Institutions, and others were also invited. The conference was inaugurated by late Shri G. V. Mavalankar and also addressed by the then Union Home Minister, Dr. K. N. Katju.

In her opening speech, Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur referred to Prime Minister Shri Jawaharlal Nehru's remarks at the last conference of the Local Self-Government Ministers and declared: "The basis of our political and judicial systems, as has been rightly pointed out by the Prime Minister, should be our Panchayats." She was sorry that they had generally "got almost into the habit of trying to build democracy from the top rather than from below." She referred to the ancient traditions of India when "village communities functioned more or less as the sole proprietors of the entire village and its wealth", a sentiment expressed in the old saying *"Panch Parameshawar."* She felt that after Independence, in spite of the Directive Principles of State Policy, "sufficient emphasis has not been laid on this very important work on which depends the welfare of the masses." And she called upon those present to "formulate a uniform course of action for the efficient functioning of Village Panchayats as units of self-government, and thereby give the vast masses of our population in the villages a greater measure of freedom, independence and responsibility in the day-to-day administration of their own problems." She pointed out that about a lakh Panchayats were then functioning in the country, in various stages of development, and "it is necessary to pool the experience in different States in regard to the working of the Panchayats with a view to making them more effective units of administration and judicial decentralisation as well as of National Planning."

In his inaugural address, Shri G. V. Mavalankar made a powerful plea for decentralisation of administration. He regretted that "not only are the local bodies not given full latitude, but what little is given is considerably diluted with a number of checks and counter-checks." He pleaded for a policy of trust by the higher upon the lower bodies "and even of granting the freedom to err." "Self-government means the right to commit mistakes and the opportunity to correct them." Shri Mavalankar also made the following profound observation: "A self-governing body is not, therefore, to be taken as a purely local and municipal body in its conception, though its functions may mostly be municipal and local. It has to be conceived as primary and basic unit for the entire structure of our Swaraj on the basis that Swaraj has to be run not by a few of us only but by every Indian who has to be given an opportunity to share in its work. A local body is thus both a unit of Swaraj and also a training ground therefor so as to make our democracy real and broadbased." And he thought that "it will be necessary to treat and look upon these bodies as on par with the State or Central Government bodies, so that all the three classes of bodies may work in perfect harmony and mutual goodwill for the service of the citizen."

Dr. K. N. Katju, with whom the question of Panchayat organisation is a passion, and who has a long experience of more than twenty-five years of these village bodies and rural problems, dealt with such problems as the unit of village organisation, their administrative functions, etc. Of special value were his remarks on the question of judicial Panchayats, as also his remarks on Panchayats and Co-operatives.

Decisions Of The Panchayat Committee Of The Conference

After the preliminary speeches, the Conference broke up into two sub-committees, one to discuss the problems relating to Village Panchayats and the other to discuss the problems of municipal and local boards. Shri Mohan Lal Gautam, U.P.'s Local Self-Government Minister, was selected to preside over the deliberations of the Panchayat Committee. The Village Panchayat Committee had to dispose of a heavy agenda which included: (1) Constitution, powers and scope of Village Panchayats—steps necessary to make local-self-government effective in villages and make them the basic units of administration; (2) Finances of Village Panchayats; (3) Co-ordination of the work of Village Panchayats; (4) The place of Village Panchayats in the next Five-Year Plan—their participation in the preparation and implementation of the Plan; and (5) Training of personnel required. The discussions at the Panchayat Committee were very much facilitated by a Memorandum on these agenda items circulated by Shri V. K. B. Pillai, Secretary of the Union Health Ministry and of the Conference. Though not representing official views of the Government, Shri Pillai's Memorandum thoroughly discussed the various problems of Panchayat organisation. We give below the salient points from the findings of the Panchayat Committee as finally approved by the L.S.G. Ministers Conference:

1. Panchayats as basic units of self-government and planning: The Committee was of the opinion that in order that the Panchayats may serve as effective basic units of self-government and as basic agencies of planning from below, as also for the development of the village community and for proper administration—in all spheres of village life, judicial, executive, economic, etc.—at the village level, it was essential that the entire population of the village should be represented as a community in the Panchayats and the constructive local talent be drawn into them. To achieve this purpose, it was necessary that frequent meetings of the entire village (Gaon Sabha) should be called by the Panchayats and that the Panchayats should function as an executive of the Gaon Sabha. There should be at least two meetings of the Gaon Sabha in each year, in one of which the budget and programme of work for the coming year should be approved, and in the other an assessment of the work carried out by the Panchayat executives and the extent to which the targets set up have been realised, should be made. Membership of the Gaon Sabha may be either of all the adults in the area of jurisdiction of the Panchayats or one adult member for each family. It was, therefore, considered necessary that the elections to the Panchayats should not be held on the basis of party affiliations, particularly in the formative stages of the Panchayats. It would be desirable if the members of the Panchayats were elected unanimously, or almost unanimously, at a meeting of the Gaon Sabha specially called for the purpose either by show of hands or by any other simple method, which would reduce expenditure on elections to the barest minimum. Such a method will not only tend to make the elections to the Panchayats non-political, but may also discourage formation of local parties or factions. It was, however, recommended that in order to encourage unanimous elections to the Panchayats, the Panchayats so elected may be given enhanced powers and preferential State assistance.

2. **Jurisdiction of Panchayats :** The Committee felt that, since the objectives in setting up Panchayats were to secure direct participation of every adult for assessing the felt needs of the village community, for determining priorities in relation to such needs, and for the formulation and implementation of programmes to realise those needs as well as to secure cheap and speedy justice and administration at the village level, the village presented itself as a normal homogeneous primary unit for the establishment of Panchayats which should be the basic unit for building up a new social structure. These considerations, however, have to be balanced by the necessity to make the Panchayats viable administrative units with resources sufficient to engage the minimum necessary establishment. Keeping these considerations in view, the Committee recommended that it would be desirable to constitute into Panchayat units of population, of say 1,000-1,500 persons represented normally by a single revenue village; but where there were administrative difficulties in forming Village Panchayats on this pattern, States should be free to make suitable departures from this pattern, bearing in mind, however, the basic principles given above.

3. **Collection of land revenue by Panchayats :** The Committee was of the opinion that using Panchayats as an agency for collecting land

revenue on behalf of the Government and giving a certain percentage of such collections as commission to them is a progressive step, which would increase the income of the Panchayats. It would be advisable, however, to try this experiment in selected Panchayats in the beginning.

4. Maintenance of village Land Records by Panchayats : The Committee was of the opinion that the Panchayats should be associated with the maintenance of land records. To achieve this object, the *Patwari* should report changes of possessions to Panchayats in addition to sending notice of such registrations to the concerned parties.

5. Management of waste lands : The Committee recommended that the management of Government lands of common utility, such as waste lands, pasture lands, fisheries, *abadi* sites, forests, etc., with such exceptions as the State Governments consider necessary in view of local conditions, be entrusted to the Village Panchayats The Village Panchayats would be responsible for the care and development of such lands, etc., and for giving leases for their use for agricultural and other purposes.

6. Letting of lands through Panchayats : The Committee was of the view that in order to save the tenants from being rack-rented, all letting or sub-letting of land for agricultural purposes should be done through the Village Panchayats and not directly.

7. Panchayats and village economic life—Co-operatives: The Committee considered it necessary to form multi-purpose co-operative societies for helping the people of the village in respect of agriculture, animal husbandry, assistance in the development of Khadi, etc., purchase and sale of consumer stores and articles required in the normal life of a villager, viz., seeds, implements cloth, kerosine oil, etc., so that the villagers are made self-sufficient in their daily necessaries.

The Committee was of the view that while the Panchayats should promote formation of such village co-operatives and assist them actively in their daily working, yet it would be desirable to keep the functions of the two bodies separate. The Panchayats should mobilise the public and the resources of the village as a whole for development works and operate in spheres where the joint efforts of the entire community of the village were necessary Co-operatives should, however, function mainly for the economic improvement of the villages in the manner mentioned above. It was however, felt that the Panchayats might take over certain functions like sale of improved seeds, etc., from the Co-operatives. The view was also expressed by some members that duplicate organisations in a village were unnecessary, and therefore the Pan chayat itself should take over the functions of the village multipurpose co-operative society.

It was recommended that Panchayats should be increasingly utilised as the channel through which Government's assistance, other than assistance through agencies like the village co-operative societies, reaches the village.

8. Compulsory service for public purposes : The Committee felt that greater dependence and emphasis should be placed on *Shramdan* by the village community for carrying out local public works schemes, and that Panchayats may be given powers to impose compulsory service for public purposes within their jurisdiction, and that it should be left to the discretion of State Governments to make suitable provisions in the Panchayats legislation for such powers.

9. Panchayat Functions : (a) Administrative : The Committee gave an exhaustive list of twenty-seven items which could be entrusted to the village bodies, mostly relating to municipal and developmental affairs. It was of the view that a long-range view should be taken in allocating functions to Panchayats, and that such allocation should be on the basis of what is desirable and not on the basis of what is possible. Wherever Panchayats show their capacity for taking over and managing additional duties and responsibilities, they should be encouraged to do so, notwithstanding the absence of specific provisions in the Panchayat legislation for entrusting such duties and responsibilities to Panchayats.

(b) Judicial : The Committee was of the view that judicial functions should be performed by a body other than the Panchayat executive which was entrusted with the administrative functions. The formation of Nyaya Panchayat or Judicial Panchayat for the area comprising four or five Village Panchayats was recommended. The procedure suggested for the constitution of Nyaya Panchayat was as follows:

Each Panchayat should elect, say five persons, to serve on the Nyaya Panchayat and if the five Panchayats comprising a group lect five such persons each to serve on the Nyaya Panchayat, a total f 25 Panchayatdars to serve on the Nyaya Panchayat would be btained. These 25 persons should again be divided into five nches of five persons each, each bench consisting of at least one ember from each Panchayat. These five benches will function ch as a Panchayat Court, administering judicial (civil, criminal d revenue) functions in rotation alternatively, i.e., if one case is lotted to the first group, the next is allotted to the second group d so on. If, however, any State Government preferred to experi-

ment with vesting judicial powers also in the executive Panchayat
it might do so.

The Committee was definitely of the opinion that, as far a possible, more and more powers to try criminal cases and civil an revenue suits, should gradually be delegated to Panchayat Courts and that enhanced civil and revenue powers might be given to suc Courts if the parties agree to refer their cases for arbitration t those Courts. Panchayat Courts should also be authorised to undertake amicable settlement of civil or revenue disputes referred t them by the parties concerned.

10. Finances of Panchayats : The Committee generally approved the allocation, *inter alia* of the following sources of tax and non-tax revenues for Panchayats :

(*a*) Graded Tax on land revenue and rent.

(*b*) A tax on trade, profession and calling.

(*c*) Property tax.

(*d*) Conservancy tax.

(*e*) Licence fees for sale of goods in markets, fairs, etc.

(*f*) Licence fee on vehicles and animals used for hire.

(*g*) Fees for fishing in ponds and sale of entire fish crop.

(*h*) Income from management of public fairs.

(*i*) Commission on collection of land revenue.

(*j*) Fines and fees realised by Panchayat Courts.

(*k*) Tax in the form of compulsory service for public purposes.

(1) Donation of land, money, *Shramdan* for public utility works.

The Committee was of the considered view that there was not much scope of increasing the income of Panchayats from tax items, and recommended, therefore, that State Governments should giv increasingly larger grants to Panchayats.

It also recommended that all the State Governments should assign a suitable portion of land revenue to Panchayats.

The Committee suggested that Panchayats should acquir adequate land either from the Government or through donation by individuals or village communities. Panchayats could improv their finances from the income from such lands.

It was also felt that the Panchayats should increase their resources by getting voluntary donations in cash and kind.

The Committee was of the opinion that Panchayats should spend as little as possible on their establishment.

11. Intermediate Units : The consensus of opinion in the Committee was that there should be an intermediary unit of self-government between the Panchayats and the State. The functions of this unit would be :

(*i*) to co-ordinate and supervise the work of Panchayats and foster their growth; and

(*ii*) to perform original functions in the unit area which cannot be performed at the Panchayat level.

The unit should not interfere with the basic functions of the Panchayats. The unit should have powers to raise revenue and should be constituted mainly by indirect elections with members of the Panchayats serving as electoral college. Some members elected by direct election might also be included if the State Government found it necessary. A section of the Committee, however, was of the view that units should be constituted mainly by direct election. It was recommended that the State Governments and the local bodies (intermediary units of self-government) should discuss and settle the functions that could be decentralised and entrusted to these local self-government units.

The Committee, among other things, suggested help to Panchayats from the Centre for protected water supply in rural areas, empowering the Panchayats to take over and manage public trusts in their areas. It was in favour of extra care in the selection of cadre for Panchayat work and their training. It suggested that a central organisation be formed to collect and collate information. One of the tasks suggested for such an organisation was to standardise the terms used in the Panchayat Acts as far as possible.

Council Of Local Self-Government Ministers Discusses Panchayats (Simla, 1955)

The Conference approved a proposal made by the Chairman, Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur, to set up a Council of Local Self-Government Ministers consisting of the Central Minister of Health as Chairman and the Ministers of Local Self-Government and Panchayat Ministers of all States as its members. The Council would meet at least once a year.

The first meeting of this Council took place at Simla on 23rd, 24th and 25th June, 1955, and reviewed the progress made in the States in the light of resolutions adopted in June 1954. It resolved that the establishment of Panchayats in Backward and Tribal Areas required special consideration and financial help, and special allotments should, therefore, be made for this purpose from the funds at the disposal of the Central Government for the welfare of Backward classes and Tribes.

The Council also decided to again commend to the States that the collection of revenue should be entrusted to Panchayats.

Regarding "Intermediate Units", it was generally agreed that there should be an intermediary unit of local self-government between the Panchayats and the State, and that this unit should have specific allocations of work. It may function not only as a supervisory body over the Panchayats but also as a co-ordinating agency, and should also be given specific powers for carrying out other works. On the question of representation, it was considered that the Panchayats should be adequately represented on this body. As regards powers and functions *vis-a-vis* this unit and Panchayats, it was felt that there should be a definite allocation of functions for the two bodies. It was, however, felt that the pattern could not be uniform throughout the country in view of differing conditions and different stages of development in the States.

As regards training of Panchayat personnel, it was resolved that there should be a definite scheme formulated for training of those serving on Panchayats in the Second Five-Year Plan of the States. This training should be open to all citizens.

Acharya Vinoba Bhave And Panchayats: *Samyayoga*

Of greatest significance for Panchayats in post-Independence years, however, are the views advanced by Acharya Vinoba Bhave, the founder of the Bhoodan Movement. Vinoba's views, which have found an increasing echo in the country, and are coming to be accepted by ever-growing sections, visualise a complete transformation, in fact a full-throated revolution in our villages. He has an integrated approach to the problem which he has adumbrated in the course of the last few years in his prayer speeches, in the course of his great Bhoodan walking-tour of the country. He aims at nothing short of a State-less, class-less society. According to his secretary, Shri Damodar Das Mundra, his latest slogan is *Samyayoga Ki Jai,* i.e. victory to *Samyayoga*. *Samyayoga,* as Vinobaji visualises it, is just and equitable distribution. He told some Sarvodaya workers recently : "The march will continue till all the divine gifts are made equally available to all. Either the mission is fulfilled or the body falls in the process." To him "Real and universal happiness would be but a dream unless and until the divine will of just and equitable distribution was executed." This *Samyayoga* follows as a natural corollary to his idea of *Gramdan*. This idea of *Gramdan* was thus sloganised during his tour of Koraput district in Orissa in 1955. The Oriya peasants who had donated whole villages to Vinoba's movement said: "*Amar Game Bhomi Malik Kohibe Nahi Kohibe Nahi,*" that is "In our village there shall be no one, none indeed, who shall claim ownership to land."[1]

"Age Of Village Families Coming"

This objective of *Samyayoga,* which is proposed to be attained through *Gramdans,* is based upon visualising the entire village as one family. Speaking at Tyandakura, Orissa, on March 11, 1955, Vinobaji thus explaied his idea of the coming Age, visualised as the "Age of Village Families."

"Man must broaden his affinities and look upon the whole world as a common heritage of humanity, irrespective of national and other barriers, if he desired to survive in the atomic age. Shri Rajagopalachari wants to stop the use of atomic weapons in warfare, but I am anxious to stop the use of small arms like rifles, pistols, bren-guns and even lathis. It is these small quarrels that engender conflict and war. I am not afraid of the atomic weapons because they hasten the choice between the acceptance of total non-violence and total annihilation.

"The new age demanded that we change our social fabric. In the past it was possible to manage with society based on traditional family group when science was not so very advanced. But now no small unit could remain isolated from the rest of the world and no single family could lead its life apart from the village community. The coming age was the age of village families (*gram parivars*).

"My idea of looking upon the whole world as common heritage of humanity does not mean that there would be no regional self-sufficiency in economic matters. On the contrary, every village, district or country ought to be self-sufficient as far as primary necessities were concerned, and atomic power would be of great help in decentralising the industries so that they could have highly developed tools and machineries in every village. Thanks to the scientific knowledge at our command, we can have enough physical comforts for everybody even if we restrict our choice to our immediate surroundings. But we must stop hankering after more than enough if we want to avert a disaster."

Village Families Only When Landownership Is Abolished

This system of *gram parivars,* Vinoba has explained, can be attained only when ownership of land is abolished. In a prayer-speech at Narhan[1], (district Darbhanga, Bihar) on August 17, 1954, he thus explained his ideas: "A man lives in and by the society. Service of the society is, therefore, his most important duty." And again: "Land was the source of life and it must be freely available to all who want it and have the capacity to use it. Today they value everything in terms of money....We must know that there are things whose importance to us cannot be assessed in money. Land is one of these." And Vinoba later declares : "It should be recognised that everyone who wants has right to ask for land and the society is duty-bound to give him land. Just as he who is thirsty has a right to ask for water, even so a cultivator has the right to ask for land. And just as a thirsty person must be given water, so should a cultivator be given land. It will be asked: Where is the land which society may give him for use? *I would say it is to be given out of what is being held by the present landowners. Poverty will have first to be shared before it can be entirely eliminated. The principal aim of Bhoodan Yajna is to abolish the individual ownership of land. Land should belong not to individuals but to the village community.* ......Land does not yield its gifts unless one is ready to put in hard labour. In asking for land, one is merely asking for work which it is everybody's right to demand. The Lokmanya said: 'Swaraj is our birth right'; even so do I declare that he who is ready to work on land can ask for land as his birthright."

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[1] See Sarvodaya, (English language monthly published by Sarvodaya Prachuralaya Tanjore), Vol. 5, No. 6, of December 1955, pp. 191-193.

Decentralisation Of Power

For the achievement of these objectives, Vinoba advocates decentralisation of power. Describing the evils of a centralised regime, Vinoba says:[2] "When the stewardship of the whole country is entrusted to four or five persons, the whole country has to suffer the consequences of their one single mistake. But this will not be so when power resides in the village itself. If one village commits a certain blunder, another will not repeat it. Hence power should be distributed in every village. There must be decentralisation of power."

Vinoba, however, has time and again emphasised that decentralisation of power, and conferment of authority on the Village Panchayats, if formally carried out but not accompanied by social justice, will have the opposite consequences. "In a decentralised democracy, proper functioning of Gram Panchayats would be possible only if there is a more equitable distribution of wealth, more specially of land, in the villages. Otherwise Gram Panchayats are likely to become instruments of oppression rather than of co-operation."[1]

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[1] See Harijan, 4.9.'54.

[2] See Article entitled 'Gram-Raj' in A.I.C.C. Economic Review, Vol. VI, Nos 6-7 of July 24, 1954.

Vinoba's Five-Fold Programme For Panchayats

In September 1954, Vinoba accordingly advocated a five-fold programme for Gram Panchayats, for "then only will it be possible to establish Ram Rajya in our villages." The following is the programme :

"1. Every Panchayat should organise a study circle which will acquaint the people of the village with new ideas and important developments taking place in the national and international fields. The circle should especially provide for the study of Gandhian and other Sarvodaya literature. Selected writings from such literature should be read out and explained to the people.

"2. The Panchayats should undertake to bring about an increase in production as one of their primary responsibilities. So long as production does not increase and the vast unemployment to be found in the villages is not liquidated, villagers are not likely to feel the urge for offering their co-operation to any development activity. Why should the villagers build roads when it is their exploiters who are likely to derive greater benefit from them?

"3. The Panchayats should consider it their duty to see that no person within their area remains unemployed or goes hungry. Just as the boycott of foreign goods helped the attainment of Swaraj so would the boycott of mill goods help bring about the village-raj.

"4. Since land is the basic factor of all production, the village land must be distributed to all. The ownership of land should belong to the village and there should be no one without land.

"5. The real power of the Panchayats is the people's support. The Panchayats should, therefore, follow their will and act under their control. They should not care whether the Government recognises them or not. The people must rely on their own strength and go forward."

Dr. Rajendra Prasad On The Need To Integrate Village Communities

And now we will conclude this Chapter, and Book I of our study. If Village Panchayats have received such attention of all concerned in post-Independence India, it is as it ought to be. Very rightly our President, Dr. Rajendra Prasad said at the fourth Conference of Bihar State Panchayat Parishad at Isri on April 24, 1955: "Our pledge to establish a welfare state in India and to uphold the best democratic traditions would be meaningless unless people in the countryside are properly trained in the democratic ways and the village community once again integrated so that initiative to improve their lot lies with them." Dr. Rajendra Prasad said that during his tour of various States, he had seen roads, bridges, school-buildings, wells, etc., constructed by the village people through voluntary help. And he added: "This constructive activity was in a large measure ascribable to the working of the Panchayats in the various States."

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[1] Interview with Shriman Narayan, published on A.I.C.C. Economic Review, Vol. VII, No. 15. Whole No. 136, dated Dec. 1, 1955.

Dr. Rajendra Prasad emphasised that Panchayats must be looked upon as the nucleus of all development work and democratic experimentation at the village level, adding: "In a country like India, when we talk of popular welfare, it has to be understood largely to mean the welfare of the village people who account for eight out of every ten inhabitants of our country. The welfare of the village community has, therefore, been the principal consideration in our Planning. The Community Project scheme and the National Extension programme have been taken in hand with a view to achieving this objective. And, naturally enough, the Village Panchayats have been working as agencies for the implementation of the developmental activities embodied in these schemes."

BOOK TWO

BOOK TWO

VILLAGES AND PANCHAYATS IN INDIAN STATES TODAY

"GRAM-SANSTHA (village organisation) has been the fundamental basis of our ancient polity. The village system was utterly destroyed during British rule. The peasant became dependent and helpless.

"The next step after independence would be revival of the GRAM-SANSTHA. The village should be the unit of Swaraj, and education, production, health, police duties, famine-relief, management of forests, in fact nearly all the problems should be under the jurisdiction of the GRAM-SANSTHA or the Gram Mandal."

—Lokmanya Tilak

"It will seek to build up a new social structure on the basis of the village communities of the past, that were ruled by the village Panch, and will strive to break down existing barriers like caste."

—Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose

"In a decentralised democracy, proper functioning of the Gram Panchayats would be possible only if there is a more equitable distribution of wealth, more specially of land in the villages. Otherwise, Gram Panchayats are likely to become instruments of oppression rather than of co-operation."

—Vinoba

CHAPTER XI

UTTAR PRADESH

PANCHAYAT elections in the hill districts of Uttar Pradesh, namely, Dehra Dun, Tehri, Garhwal, Almora and Nainital commenced on October 17, 1955 and were completed by November first week. The Panchayats in these districts number 5,142. A remarkable feature of the elections of the hill districts was that the great majority of the elections were unanimous. Votes had to be cast for the elections of only 135 Gram Sabha *Pradhans* (Presidents or headmen) and 70 Panchayats. These elections, based on adult franchise, started a process in village democracy unprecedented in any other State of the Indian Union, under which 55,000 Panchayats were elected by the end of December 1955.

Recent Panchayat Elections

Under the new arrangements, the number of Gram Sabhas was raised from the former 35,844 to 72,425 (67,025 in the Plain districts and 5,400 in the hill districts), divided into 1,43,600 constituencies. In the elections to the Village Panchayats, 18 per cent of the seats are reserved for the Harijans. but more than this figure can seek elections and remain *bona fide* members of the village bodies on being elected. Elections were held by show of hands. The *Naib Tehsildars* and the *Sadar Kanungos* acted as election officers and assistant election officers. A Presiding Officer and two Polling Officers were deputed to each constituency, these responsibilities being fulfilled mainly by the village school teachers. Besides electing the Village Panchayats, the electors also elected the village *Pradhan* (headman). The *Up-Pradhan* (the vice-headman) will be elected later by the elected Village Panchayat. The Nyaya Panchayat (that is, the judicial body of the Panchayat, formerly called the Adalati Panchayat) will be nominated by the District Officials from among the members elected to the Village Panchayat.

Under the U.P. Panchayat Raj Act, 1947, each village or a group of villages with a population of about 1,500 was constituted into a Gaon Sabha with certain powers for local administration. Since January 1, 1951, they were also entrusted with the registration of births and deaths within their jurisdiction and the maintenance of a register of population and a register of adults. For an area covering 3 to 5 Gaon Sabhas, a Panchayati Adalat was formed with judicial powers extending to a specified class of civil, criminal and revenue cases. Thus were constituted 35,844 Gaon Sabhas and

8,435 Panchayati Adalats in the whole State. For each Adalat there was a paid secretary, and over about 15 secretaries an inspector was appointed who thus numbered about 500. The whole staff worked under the District Planning Officer, who in turn works under the District Officer. Table[1] below gives the distribution of population per Gaon Sabha, Adalati Panchayat Circle, and Panchayat Inspector Circle in each revenue division of the State, as per 1951 Census :

TABLE 18

Revenue Division		No. of Gaon Sabhas	No. of Panchayati Adalats	No. of Panchayat Inspector Circle	AVERAGE POPULATION PER		
					Gaon Sabha	Adalat	Inspector Circle
Uttar Pradesh	..	35,844	8,435	514	1,530	6,503	1,06,721
Meerut ..	..	2,746	682	39	1,936	7,794	1,36,294
Agra ..	..	2,852	687	52	1,718	7,130	94,204
Rohilkhand	..	3,888	836	54	1,489	6,924	1,07,192
Allahabad	..	3,620	948	50	1,546	5,905	1,11,949
Jhansi	..	1,468	375	43	1,687	6,603	57,582
Banaras	..	3,875	999	51	1,572	6,098	1,19,448
Gorakhpur	..	5,918	1,338	71	1,426	6,309	1,18,898
Kumaon	..	2,011	390	38	1,013	5,224	53,615
Lucknow	..	4,158	1,006	55	1,505	6,222	1,13,806
Faizabad	..	5,308	1,174	61	1,497	6,771	1,30,306

Village Population

Out of the total population of 6,32,15,733 of Uttar Pradesh, 5,45,90,043 constitute the rural population distributed in 1,11,722 inhabited villages of the State spread over 1,12,044 square miles of area. The average population of a village calculates to 489 persons and the average area to about one square mile. The number of inhabited villages returned at the Censuses of 1941 and 1931 were 1,05,773 and 1,11,001, and the average village population was 467 and 397 respectively. The average village population and area in the natural divisions of the State is given in the following table :[2]

TABLE 19

Natural Division		Average Village Population	Average Village area in square miles
UTTAR PRADESH	..	489	1.0
Himalayan ..	..	150	1.3
East Plain ..	..	470	0.6
Central Plain	..	558	0.9
West Plain ..	..	632	1.2
Hills & Plateau	..	456	2.1

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[1] Census of India, Vol. II, Uttar Pradesh, Part I-A—Report by Rajeshwari Prasad, Allahabad, 1953, p. 19.

[2] Ibid, p. 116.

It will be noticed that in respect of the area as well as population, there is a steady decrease from the west to the east of the State. The following table[1] shows the number of villages of various sizes in each natural division, and the percentage of the villages of each natural division which fall into each class :

TABLE 20

Natural Division	NUMBER & PERCENTAGE OF VILLAGES WITH POPULATION OF 10,000 & over	5,000 to 10,000	2,000 to 5,000	1,000 to 2,000	500 to 1,000	Under 500	Total
UTTAR PRADESH ..	1	120	2,675	10,261	23,208	75,447	1,11,722
		(0.1)	(2.4)	(9.2)	(20.8)	(67.5)	(100.0)
Himalayan ..	—	1	15	39	363	14,425	14,843
			(0.1)	(0.3)	(2.4)	(97.2)	(100.0)
East Plain ..	1	33	661	2,966	7,478	24,183	35,322
		(0.1)	(1.9)	(8.4)	(21.2)	(68.4)	(100.0)
Central Plain ..	—	16	644	2,800	6,289	15,121	24,870
		(0.1)	(2.6)	(11.2)	(25.3)	(60.8)	(100.0)
West Plain ..	—	65	1,208	3,812	7,688	16,551	29,324
		(0.2)	(4.1)	(13.0)	(26.2)	(56.5)	(100.0)
Hills & Plateau ..	—	5	147	644	1,390	5,177	7,363
		(0.1)	(2.0)	(8.7)	(18.9)	(70.3)	(100.0)

It would be seen that villages with a population of less than 500 constitute 67.5 per cent of all the villages in the State, and those with a population between 500 and 1,000 constitute 20.8 per cent. Thus villages of less than 1,000 population constitute the overwhelming majority (88.3 per cent) of all the villages in the State.

Livelihood Pattern Of The Village Population

This information about U.P. villages, we are sure, would be found relevant for a study of the Panchayat organisation in the State. Equally necessary it is to know the livelihood pattern of the village population. The 1951 Census has divided the agricultural classes into the following categories :

(*i*) Cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned; and their dependents.
(*ii*) Cultivators of land wholly or mainly unowned; and their dependents.
(*iii*) Cultivating labourers, and their dependents.
(*iv*) Non-cultivating owners of land; agricultural rent-receivers and their dependents.

The following table[2] compares the livelihood pattern in U.P. from 1901 to 1951 (actual and percentage):

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[1] Ibid, p. 116.

[2] Ibid; constructed from Table 80 on p. 97; in 1931 and 1941, the occupation of only self-supporting persons and earning dependents was recorded and so the livelihood pattern of only these two sub-classes is available for these years. The data for 1941 are based on tabulation of 2 per cent of the slips and are not dependable.

TABLE 21

Means of livelihood	1951	1941	1931	1921	1911	1901
Cultivation of owned and unowned land ..	1,79,33,811 (66.82)	1,04,23,400 (54.45)	1,38,07,157 (57.15)	1,58,04,983 (63.65)	1,38,94,178 (56.38)	1,11,80,469 (47.35)
Employment as cultivating labourer ..	20,14,498 (7.50)	17,61,700 (9.21)	34,19,185 (14.15)	25,08,671 (10.11)	29,64,552 (12.03)	25,97,107 (11.00)
Rent on agricultural land ..	2,78,682 (1.04)	33,200 (0.17)	4,54,487 (1.88)	3,33,065 (1.34)	3,46,658 (1.41)	13,80,849 (5.85)
Total agricultural	2,02,26,991 (75.36)	1,22,18,300 (63.83)	1,76,80,829 (73.18)	1,86,46,719 (75.10)	1,72,05,388 (69.82)	1,51,58,425 (64.20)

From 1931 to 1951, people with agricultural means of livelihood have increased from 73.18 per cent of the total population to 75.36 per cent. In absolute figures, it represents an increase from 177 lakhs to 202 lakhs. This increase, according to the Report under reference, is due to the rise in the number of cultivation of owned and unowned land from 138 lakhs to 179 lakhs; the number of cultivating labourers has gone down. The reasons given are that on account of high agricultural prices many owning non-cultivators have taken to cultivation; former cultivators of *sir* and *khudkasht* lands, who were recorded as labourers, have now, under new legislation, become owning cultivators; thirdly, a large number of persons having both labour and cultivation as their occupation, have now returned cultivation instead of labour as their main occupation; fourthly, many former zamindars have now taken to cultivation, thus reducing the number employed as labourers.

Agricultural Labour Enquiry Returns Higher Percentage Of Agricultural Labourers

We are not very sure of the figures returned for agricultural labourers and the Census estimate appears to us rather low. Another Government survey, which intensively investigated 14,909 families in a number of sample villages spread all over Uttar Pradesh, gives a different pattern of occupational distribution (Table 22,[1] next page).

This survey, certainly more detailed and thorough than the huge Census operations, gives the number of agricultural worker families as 13 per cent of the total number of families. For a fuller

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[1] Agricultural Wages in India, Vol.. I, being results of Agricultural labour Enquiry conducted by the Ministry of Labour, Government of India; printed at Nasik, published by Manager of Publications, Delhi, 1952; p. 164.

TABLE 22

Occupation and Status		Total No. of families		Percentage of families to total No. of families.
Agricultural owners		1,250		8.4
Agricultural tenants		8,330		55.9
Agricultural workers :			7.9)	
(a) Without land	1,174)	1,945	)	13.0
	)		5.1)	
(b) With land	771)			
		11,525		77.3
TOTAL AGRICULTURAL FAMILIES ..				
		673		5.9
Non-Agricultural workers		698		4.7
Artisans		556		8.7
Traders		1,557		8.4
Others				
TOTAL NON-AGRICULTURAL FAMILIES ..		3,384		22.7
ALL FAMILIES		14,909		100.0

appreciation of this livelihood pattern, we reproduce the following table[1] showing the population of agricultural families in each zone:

TABLE 23

Zone	No. of villages	Population	Total No. of families	Average size of family	No. of Agricultural families			
					Owners	Tenants	Agricultural workers	Total
I. Eastern	30	17,055	2,944	5.8	131	1,795	417	2,343
II. Central	28	17,571	4,018	4.4	206	2,430	568	3,204
III. Western	34	27,008	5,415	5.0	621	2,730	686	4,037
IV. Hill	8	1,821	344	5.4	193	111	..	304
V. Tarai	9	5,960	1,004	5.7	49	696	108	858
VI. Southern	11	5,632	1,184	4.8	50	568	166	784
Total	120	74,780	14,909	5.0	1,250	8,330	1,945	11,525

Survey Of Village Khalispur, Azamgarh District

This Survey thus covered 120 villages spread over all the six zones in Uttar Pradesh and its findings may be regarded as nearer the mark than what is indicated in the Census Report. In yet another Survey (village Khalispur, Police Station Janipur, district Azamgarh), conducted by the Union Ministry of Labour, the percentage of persons in agricultural labour families was found to be nearly 22 per cent. The following table[2] gives the occupational classification of families in village Khalispur :

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[1] Ibid, p. 164.

[2] Report on an Enquiry into the Conditions of Agricultural Workers in Village Khalispur in Uttar Pradesh, Government of India, Ministry of Labour, Delhi, 1952; p. 29.

TABLE 24

Occupations	Total No. of families in the village.	Percentage of families to total No. of families.	Total No. of persons in all the families.	Percentage of persons in the families to the total No. of persons in all families.
AGRICULTURAL	171	84.7	877	86.9
1. Non-cultivating owners	12	5.9	33	3.3
2. Cultivating owners	111	55.0	603	59.7
3. Tenants :				
(a) Non-cultivating	..	..	..	..
(b) Cultivating partly owned and partly leased land	6	3.0	23	2.3
(c) Cultivating only leased land	..	..	..	..
4. Labourers with land free of rent				
(a) attached	27	13.4	173	17.1
(b) casual	..	..	..	..
5. Labourers without land				
(a) attached	11	5.4	33	3.3
(b) casual	4	2.0	12	1.2
NON-AGRICULTURAL	31	15.3	133	13.1
TOTAL	202	100.0	1.010	100.0

Intensive Family Survey Of Agricultural Workers In U. P.

Another Government of India Report tells us the followin about agricultural labourers in U.P.[1] "About 90 per cent of th families were those of casual workers and 10 per cent of attache workers; 57.2 per cent of the families were without land and 42. per cent with land. The average size of the holdings in the sampl villages was 5.3 acres for all families and only 1.5 acres fo agricultural labour families. Of the casual wage earners, 84.8 pe cent were men and 14.0 per cent women. Of the attached earner 90.1 per cent were men. The average size of the family was 4. and the average earning strength 1.5. Of the 1.5 earners, 1.4 wer wage earners consisting of 1.2 men and 0.2 women. Child earner formed an insignificant proportion. An earner had to support, on a average, 2.8 persons (including himself). The pressure was hig in the Eastern and Southern zones (viz., 3.1 persons per earner and lower in the Central and Western zones (viz., 2.7 persons pe earner)."

Caste And Property Differences Coincide

Another fact to be borne in mind is that in the villages of Utta Pradesh, as also elsewhere in India, the caste differences not ur often tend to coincide with property differences. The upper cultivators very often belong to the so-called 'higher' castes, and the uneconomic holders as also the agricultural labourers are generally of the so-called 'lower' castes. Says an official Report :[1] "Though the caste-system is breaking down gradually in urban areas under the influence of economic factors, it is still alive in the villages. Either because certain castes are conventionally required to adopt a few callings, such as scavenging, mid-wifery, laundry, shoe-making, skinning or tanning, or because persons belonging to scheduled or backward classes have not received sufficient opportunities for economic advancement. The bulk of agricultural workers belong to these backward classes."

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[1] Agricultural Labour Enquiry: Report on Intensive Survey of Agricultur Labour, Vol. II, North India: Government of India, Ministry of Labour, Dell 1955: p 35

These agricultural labourers, poor, illiterate and backward, whose interests are naturally opposed to those of the substantial cultivators of the village who employ them, have been conferred equal rights by the State Panchayat legislation. They have as much power and right in regard to votes, and all other things as any other inhabitant of the village. This has had a profound effect on the working of the Panchayats, and has posed certain problems of Panchayat organisation and functioning which have to be boldly faced. To these we shall come later.

Preponderance Of Uneconomic Holdings

These problems are aggravated by the fact that the large majority of cultivating owners are cultivators of very small, and in many cases, fragmented holdings. According to data collected by the U.P. Zamindari Abolition Committee, 55.8 per cent of the holdings were under 2 acres. 37.8 per cent of the cultivators numbering 46,39,331 had holdings of less than 1 acre which covered only 6 per cent of the total holding area, i.e. 24,81,165 acres. U.P.'s Revenue Minister, Shri Charan Singh, has estimated 6¼ acres as the size of an economic holding, from which it follows that 85.4 per cent cultivators, numbering 1,04,85,411, would not have economic holdings. Altogether they occupied only 45.5 per cent, that is, 1,88,40,479 acres out of the total holding area.[2] These uneconomic holders, more specially the 55.8 per cent cultivating less than 2 acres, in the majority of cases, come from the so-called 'lower' castes, and in all village affairs they find themselves nearer to, and ally themselves with the agricultural labourers.

Before examining the functioning of Panchayats in U.P., and the effects of this population ratio upon the same, it is essential to have an idea of the chief features of the Panchayat legislation of the State.

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[1] Agricultural Wages in India, Vol. I, Op. cit., p. 165.

[2] See Report of the U.P. Zamindari Abolition Committee, p. 24.

U.P. Village Panchayat Act Of 1920

It may be mentioned that a Panchayat legislation, the U.P. Village Panchayat Act (Act VI of 1920), was enacted by the British rulers in 1920 in pursuance of a policy adopted by the Central regime in Delhi to revive the Panchayats in India. The Act now stands repealed. It sought to confer on the Panchayats civil, criminal and also administrative powers. The Panchayats were also assigned other duties in matters of sanitation, education and the like. It was made incumbent on the Panchayats to look after the propagation and spread of education. Improvement of education, public health and the supply of drinking water, formed some of the chief duties of the Panchayats. Other responsibilities included the maintenance of village tracks and works of public utility. The village fund was to be administered by the Panchayat of the circle and spent for the improvement of the circle and well-being of inhabitants. This fund included (i) all the fees levied for the institution of the suits and cases under Section 23 of the Act, and (ii) the fines and compensation paid to the Panchayat under Section 60 of the Act. This Act, enacted by a wooden bureaucracy having no roots among the people and utterly divorced from them, was doomed to failure. All its high-sounding objectives of establishing and developing village local government remained on paper. The Panchayats which were constituted, few and far between as they were, did not represent the people and were packed with landlords and other flatterers of the Government. Limited as the spheres of Panchayat activity were under the Act, no advance worth the name was made in the administration of civil or criminal justice in the rural areas or improvement in sanitation and other common concerns of the village.

The U. P. Panchayat Raj Act Of 1947: Procedure For Election

The first genuine attempt to revive Panchayats in Uttar Pradesh was made by the Congress Ministry in 1947, through the enactment of the U.P. Panchayat Raj Act (Act No. 26 of 1947). It laid down that on and from the date on which a Gaon Sabha is established in any area, the 1920 Act will stand repealed, and any Panchayat established under the said Act, and its funds, properties and liabilities, shall be transferred to the new Gaon Sabha. The Act was made applicable to the whole of U.P., except the Jaunsar Bawar Pargana of Dehra Dun district, and the portion of Mirzapu district south of Kaimur range.

The Act extended the membership of the Gaon Sabha[1] to all adults permanently residing within its area. People of unsound mind, suffering from leprosy, undischarged insolvents, those convicted of an election offence, or of an offence involving moral turpitude, and servants of the State or local authority, or an honorary Munsif or honorary Assistant Collector having jurisdiction over any area of the Gaon Sabha, were excluded from the membership. The State Government was conferred authority to remove some of the disqualifications. It was laid down that every year some general meetings of the Gaon Sabha be held, more specially the *Kharif* and *Rabi* meetings after harvesting of the *Kharif* and *Rabi* crops, respectively. One-fifth of the total members of the Sabha constituted the quorum, but for a meeting adjourned for want of it, no quorum is necessary.

The Act provided the election by the Gaon Sabha, on the joint electorate system, from among its members, of a *Pradhan* and a *Up-Pradhan,* that is, the President and the Vice-President, the term of these offices being three years. Besides this, the Act provided for the election of an executive by the Gaon Sabha, called the Gaon Panchayat, the membership of this body ranging from 30 to 51, seats being reserved for the minority community and scheduled castes. The *Pradhan* and *Up-Pradhan* of the Gaon Sabha were required to fill the same posts for the Gaon Panchayat. The Act laid down three years to be the term of office of a member of the Gaon Panchayat and the compulsory retirement of one-third of its membership annually.

The Act directed that the Gaon Sabha shall consider and pass the budget at its *Kharif* meeting, and consider the accounts of the previous year at its *Rabi* meeting. The Gaon Sabha, at both the meetings, shall consider the biennial reports of business submitted by the *Pradhan.*

Obligatory Functions Of Panchayats

It was made obligatory on the Gaon Panchayat to make provision for the following within its jurisdiction, so far as funds may allow :

(1) Construction, repair, maintenance, cleaning and lighting of public streets;

(2) Medical relief;

(3) Sanitation and taking curative and preventive measures;

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[1] It should be noted that whereas Section 4 of the U.P. Village Panchayat Act of 1920 authorised the Collector of the district to establish a Panchayat for a village or any circle of villages, or group of adjacent villages, the 1947 Act empowered the State Government alone to establish a Gaon Sabha for every village or group of villages by a notification in the official Gazette and also declare the name and the territorial jurisdiction.

(4) Upkeep, protection and supervision of any building, or other property, which may belong to the Gaon Sabha, or which may be transferred to it for management;

(5) Registering births, deaths, and marriages;

(6) Removal of encroachments on public streets, public places, and property vested in Gaon Sabha;

(7) Regulating places for the disposal of dead bodies of human beings, and animals, and of other offensive matter;

(8) Regulation of *melas* (fairs) and markets within its jurisdiction;

(9) Establishing and maintaining primary schools for boys and girls;

(10) Establishment, management and care of common grazing grounds, and land for the common benefit of persons residing within its jurisdiction;

(11) Construction, repair and maintenance of public wells, tanks and ponds for the supply of water for drinking, washing and bathing purposes, and regulation of sources of water supply for drinking purposes;

(12) Regulating the construction of a new building, or the extension and alteration of any existing building;

(13) Assisting the development of agriculture, commerce and industry;

(14) Rendering assistance in extinguishing fire, and protecting life and property when fire occurs;

(15) The administration of civil and criminal justice, and the election of Panches on the panel of the Panchayati Adalats;

(16) The maintenance of such records relating to cattle census, population census and other statistics as may be prescribed;

(17) Maternity and child welfare;

(18) Allotment of places for storing manure;

(19) Fulfilling any other obligation imposed by any other law on a Gaon Sabha.

Discretionary Functions

Besides these obligatory functions, the Act directed that a Gaon Panchayat may also make provision for the following within its jurisdiction :

(1) Planting and maintaining trees at the side of public streets, and other public places;

(2) Improved breeding and medical treatment of cattle, and prevention of cattle diseases;

(3) Filling in of insanitary pits and levelling of land;

(4) Organising, subject to rules prescribed, a Village Volunteer Force for watch and ward, and for assisting the Gaon Panchayat and the Panchayati Adalat in the discharge of their functions, and for the service of summons and notices issued by them;

(5) Development of co-operation, and establishment of improved seed and agricultural implements stores;

(6) Relief against famine or any other calamity;

(7) Extension of the *abadi;*

(8) Establishment and maintenance of a library or a reading room;

(9) Establishment and maintenance of an *Akhara,* or club, or other places for recreation and games;

(10) Regulating the collection, removal and disposal of manure and sweepings;

(11) Prohibiting and regulating the curing, tanning and dyeing of skins within 220 yards of the *abadi;*

(12) Setting up organisations to promote goodwill and social harmony between different communities;

(13) Public radio sets and gramophones;

(14) Any other measure of public utility, calculated to promote the moral and material wellbeing of the community.

Mention may also be made of some other discretionary functions. A Gaon Panchayat can construct new bridges or culverts, and establish new Ayurvedic or Unani hospitals and dispensaries. If so directed by the State Government, it should assist any Government servant in the discharge of his duties within its area.

A Gaon Panchayat is further authorised to make any representation to the proper authority concerning the wellbeing of persons within its jurisdiction. It may also make any recommendation regarding the appointment, transfer or dismissal of a patrol of the Irrigation Department, a *patwari* or *mukhia* within its jurisdiction. It is further directed that on receiving a complaint from any person residing within its jurisdiction about the misconduct of any petty official, such as the constable, the vaccinator, *patwari,* patrol of the Canal Department, or peon of any Government Department, the Panchayat shall forward the complaint to the proper authority with its report.

In respect of any area within its jurisdiction, a Gaon Panchayat is authorised to enter into a contract with the Provincial Government to collect any taxes, cesses, fees or other dues, and get such collection charges as may be prescribed. It is also open to the

Panchayat to enter into a contract with all or any proprietor or proprietors to collect rent on being allowed such collection charges as may be prescribed.

A Gaon Panchayat has the power to appoint a secretary and other staff in accordance with the scheme as approved by prescribed authority. In case of emergency, a person may be employed without the sanction of the prescribed authority for a period not exceeding three months.

Sources Of Revenue Of Panchayats

Each Gaon Sabha has a Gaon Fund at its disposal. This fund consists of taxes levied under the Act, Government grants, the sale proceeds of all dust, dirt, dung, or refuse, including the dead bodies of animals collected, and loans, gifts and grants from the District Board or other local authority. The Act lays down that the Gaon Panchayat is responsible for the realisation of Panchayat taxes and dues, custody of its funds, and maintenance of its accounts. The accounts of every Gaon Sabha are audited every year. The Gaon Sabha is empowered to levy the following taxes :

(i) Tax on the rent payable under the U.P. Tenancy Act, 1939. This should not be more than one anna in the rupee.

(ii) Tax on the assumed rental value of *Sir* and *Khudkasht* lands.

(iii) Tax on such persons who are engaged in any trade, calling and profession known as the *Haisiyat* tax; a tax on buildings can also be levied.

Other non-tax sources of revenue are fees and fines realised, donations, incomes from ponds, fisheries and management of public fairs. An annual licence fee of Rs. 2 on *Mazdoors,* Rs. 3 on *Palledars,* Rs. 8 on merchants, Rs. 1-8 per vehicle on persons plying vehicles on hire, Rs. 2-8 per animal on owners of animals used for riding, driving or carrying loads (except sheep or goats) and annas two per animal on owners of sheep or goats may be levied.

Judicial Functions

We will now turn our attention to the judicial aspect of U.P. Panchayats. For constituting the Panchayati Adalats, every district is divided into circles in which the area coming within the jurisdiction of several Gaon Panchayats is combined, care being taken to keep such areas in each circle, as far as possible, contiguous. On an average, about five Gaon Sabha areas are combined in one Panchayati Adalat circle, the average population of a Gaon Sabha being 1,530 and of an Adalat circle 6,503. Each Gaon Sabha is authorised to elect five persons to act as Panches for the

Adalat. The panel of 20 to 25 members thus elected to every Panchayati Adalat elects a person as Sarpanch.[1] The term of every Panch is fixed at three years from the date of his election. He is required to take an oath of office in the prescribed manner. An elected Panch is entitled to be removed on misbehaviour by the prescribed authority.

The Sarpanch has to be a man who is able to record proceedings. For the trial of every case, the Sarpanch appoints a Bench of five persons from the panel, and if he is not there, then at least one of the five in the panel has to be such who is able to record evidence and proceedings. No Panch or Sarpanch can take part in any case, suit, or proceedings in which any one of them has any interest.

A Panchayati Adalat is empowered to try offences falling under the following Sections :

(i) Section 140, 160, 172, 174, 179, 277, 279, 283, 285, 286, 289, 290, 294, 323, 334, 336, 341, 352, 356, 357, 358, 374, 379, 403, 411 (where the value of the stolen or misappropriated property, as far as Sections 79, 403 and 411 are concerned, does not exceed fifty rupees), 426, 428, 430, 447, 448, 500, 504, 506, 509 and 510 of the Indian Penal Code.

(ii) Sections 20 to 24 of the Cattle Trespass Act of 1871.

(iii) Sub-section (1) of Section 10 of the United Provinces District Boards Primary Education Act of 1926.

(iv) An offence under Section 3, 4 and 7 of the Public Gambling Act of 1867.

(v) An offence under the Panchayat Raj Act, or any rule made thereunder, or any other offence, under any other enactment, declared by the State Government to be cognizable by a Panchayati Adalat.

A Panchayati Adalat is not competent to inflict a substantive sentence of imprisonment. It may impose a fine not exceeding one hundred rupees, but no imprisonment is awarded in default of payment of fine. It is provided that whenever the Sarpanch of a Panchayati Adalat has reasons to apprehend that any person is likely to commit a breach of peace, or disturb public tranquillity, he may call upon such person to execute a bond for an amount not exceeding Rs. 100, with or without sureties, for keeping the peace for a period not exceeding 15 days. If after enquiry, a Panchayati

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[1] Under the U.P. Village Panchayat Act, 1920, the Panches, as the Sarpanch, were appointed by the District Collector. No Panch was required to take oath of office.

Adalat is satisfied that a case brought before it is false, frivolous or vexatious, it may direct the complainant to pay the accused compensation not exceeding five rupees.

The Panchayati Adalat is also empowered to try suits which are tried by the Small Causes Court. The following suits, which do not exceed one hundred rupees in value, can be tried :

(i) A suit for money due on a contract, other than contract in respect of immovable property;
(ii) A suit for the recovery of immovable property, or for the value thereof:
(iii) A suit for compensation for wrongfully taking or injuring a movable property;
(iv) A suit for damages caused by cattle trespass.

It is open to the State Government, or the prescribed authority, by notification in the official Gazette, to exend the powers of any Panchayati Adalat and direct that its jurisdiction shall extend to all such suits as do not exceed Rs. 500 in value.

The Act directs that the Tehsildar shall transfer all the disputed proceedings under Section 33, 34, 35, 39, 40 and 41 of the U.P. Land Revenue Act, 1901, to the Panchayati Adalats, but such proceedings under Sections 34 and 35 above, in which land paying more than Rs. 200 as land revenue is involved, shall not be transferred to any Panchayati Adalat. Nor shall the Adalat entertain any application for correction of records or mutation of names. On the question of title, legal character, contract or obligation, the decision of the Adalat is not binding. The Sub-Divisional Officer shall have powers of revision either upon reference made to him or on his own motion. But there shall be no appeal against any order of a Panchayati Adalat. It cannot revise or alter its decisions. No legal practitioner can appear before any Adalat. Panchayati Adalats have special powers in matters of compromise, etc. In case of a division of opinion, the will of the majority prevails. Fines imposed by it are recoverable through the aid of State Government. Expenses of the Panchayati Adalats are charged from the Gaon Fund.

It is provided that certain categories of persons are not to be tried by the Panchayati Adalat. Thus no Adalat can take cognizance of any offence in which the accused (i) has been previously fined for theft by any Panchayati Adalat; (ii) has been previously convicted of an offence with imprisonment for a term of three years or more; (iii) is registered member of a criminal tribe; (iv) has been bound over to be of good behaviour under Section 109 o

110 of Criminal Procedure Code; (v) has been previously convicted for gambling.

The Munsif or Sub-Divisional Officer has complete powers over the Panchayati Adalat. They may, on the application of any authority or on their own motion, at any time, in a pending case or proceeding, and within sixty days of the case, or from the date of a decree, or order, call for all the records from the Panchayati Adalat. This step they are to take in case there has been a miscarriage of justice, or if there is any apprehension of such miscarriage. They can then cancel the jurisdiction of the Panchayati Adalat with regard to any suit, case or proceeding, quash any decree or order passed by the Panchayati Adalat at any stage. The case can then be tried by any Magistrate with appropriate authority.

Remarkable Success Of Panchayati Adalats In U. P.

These Panchayati Adalats in Uttar Pradesh have attained a measure of success in their early years which augurs well for the future. From January 1, 1950, to March 31, 1954, 13,46,637 cases were disposed of by them, and of these 5,02,902 were compromised. Only 4.2 per cent applications for revision were filed and 1.8 per cent revisions were allowed. It has been said that justice is really not administered in the Panchayati Adalats, and while the parties tolerate their revenue and civil decisions, most of the revisions filed relate to criminal cases because unjust and unbearable sentences are passed by the Panches. This criticism is based on misinformation as would be apparent from the following:

During the period commencing from the 1st April, 1951, to 31st March, 1954, Panchayati Adalats disposed of 9,81,339 cases. This figure includes 1,78,282 revenue cases, 3,04,717 civil suits and 4,98,340 criminal cases. 7,117 revisions, i.e., 3.9 per cent, were filed in revenue cases, of which 3,012 amounting to 1.6 per cent were allowed. 9,061 equal to 2.9 per cent revisions were filed in civil suits and were accepted in 3,678 or 1.2 per cent cases 25,900 revision applications or 5.1 per cent were filed in criminal cases. In 11,376 cases, or in 2.2 per cent of the total disposed of, revisions were accepted. It is, therefore, obvious that the story that the percentage of revisions filed against the judgement of Panchayati Adalats in criminal cases is frightfully large is untenable. In criminal cases there has in fact been a progressive decline in the percentage of revision applications filed and allowed. This only shows that most of the revision applications which were allowed on grounds of procedural irregularities in the beginning were not even filed in subsequent years when the Panches in the Panchayati Adalats gained experience and working knowledge. In 1951-52, 10,015 revisions were filed, that is, in 9 per cent of the total disposed of, and in 4,142 cases, i.e., in 4.5 per cent of the total revisions were accepted. In 1952-53 only in 7,810 cases, revisions were filed, i.e., 5.4 per cent, and in 3,504 cases these revisions were accepted, which is only 2.4 per cent of the total number of cases disposed of. In 1953-54, only in 8,075 cases revisions were filed, i.e., 4.2 per cent, and in 3,730 cases these revisions were accepted, which is only 1.9 per cent of the total number of cases disposed of. The impression in certain quarters that a very large number of writ applications are filed against the decisions of the Panchayati Adalats in High Court is equally wrong. During the 3 years from 1950-52, the Allahabad High Court disposed of 295 writ applications. In 233 of these, that is, in 79 per cent, decisions of the Panchayati Adalats were upheld, and only in 21 per cent cases, the High Court considered it necessary to alter, partly allow, or set aside the decisions of Panchayati Adalats. Table 25 (pp. 310-311) will show the working of Panchayati Adalats in U.P. at a glance.

Panchayats And Land Management: U. P. Gaon *Samaj Manual*

The functions of the Panchayat relating to land management have been delegated, after the enforcement of the Zamindari Abolition Act in 1950, to special bodies called the Land Management Committees. The *U.P. Gaon Samaj Manual,* published by the State Government in 1953, gives details about these Committees. U.P.'s Revenue Minister, Shri Charan Singh, who is mainly responsible for this publication, rightly points out in the foreword that "on the proper working of these Committees will depend to a considerable extent not only the success of the Zamindari Abolition Scheme but also the prosperity and the contentment of the countryside. It is, therefore, necessary that our Land Management Committees should not only consist of persons of undoubted probity but also those who are charged with a zeal to work the experiment and are properly equipped to do the same." It is with a view to equiping the Chairman and Members of the Land Management Committees—who obviously cannot wade through the comprehensive U.P. Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act, the rules framed thereunder and the various orders, etc., issued—with the necessary minimum knowledge of what and how they are required to manage, that this valuable handbook has been issued. It explains the features of the law and the rules with which they will be concerned, the procedures to be adopted in performing the functions, and their rights, limitations and liabilities.

The Gaon Samaj, over which the Land Management Committee is required to exercise its authority, consists generally of one village and is known by the name of the village. Villages which are completely un-inhabited or whose population is less than 20 adults, have been combined with a neighbouring village and the villages which are thus combined constitute one Gaon Samaj. The area of the village or villages, which constitute one Gaon Samaj, is called its circle, and it has jurisdiction over all the land in the circle. All adult persons, both men and women, who live in the village are members of the Gaon Samaj.

All the work of the Gaon Samaj is to be done by its Land Management Committee. All the members of the Gaon Panchayat, who are also members of a particular Gaon Samaj (i.e. who live in the circle of the Gaon Samaj) are members of the Land Management Committee. Where the number of such members is less than five, the Collector shall nominate as many persons as will make the number five. Vacancies caused by death, resignation, etc., are to be filled by fresh nomination.

Attempt To Curb The Mischief Of The Village Revenue-Records-Keeper

If the *Pradhan* of the Gaon Panchayat is a member of the Land Management Committee, he shall be its Chairman. In case this is not so, the *Manual* provides for the *Up-Pradhan* (Vice-Chairman) of the Gaon Panchayat to become the Chairman of the Land Management Committee, or, in the alternative, a fresh election of this dignitary under the supervision of the supervisor *Kanungo*. The *lekhpals,* a new cadre recently created to take the place of the old *patwaris* (the lowest village revenue official under the British, responsible for the maintenance of village records), who enjoy different service conditions and scales of pay, will be the secretary of the Land Management Committee. Under the guidance and supervision of the Chairman, the *lekhpal* will be responsible for the proper maintenance of the accounts and registers of the Committee, but he will not be its member. He is required to attend all the meetings of the Committee and give any information asked for by the Committee in ~~respect of entries in the~~ land records, etc. People who are aware of the great mischief which the *patwaris* of old used to perpetuate in the villages, which had no authority or control over them, would better appreciate this new salutary rule which considerably reduces the mischief-making capacities of the village revenue-records-keeper.

Gaon Samaj And The Village Land

Before abolition of the zamindari system in U.P., the intermediaries owned whole or part of the village but now, after the

TABLE

S. No.	Cases	Revenue 1-1-'50 to 31-3-'51	1-4-'51 to 31-3-'52	1,4-'52 to 31-3-'53	1-4-'53 to 31-3-'54	Civil 1-1-'50 to 31-3-'51	1-4-'51 to 31-3-'52	1,4-'52 to 31-3-'53	1-4-'53 to 31-3-'54
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1.	Previous balance	..	..	..	21,124	..	..	..	48,254
2.	Cases restored	..	..	..	2,317	..	..	..	3,278
3.	Received from other courts ..	..	..	..	22,927	..	..	..	1,257
4.	Cases instituted	..	..	..	1,11,220	..	..	..	83,285
	Total No. of cases for disposal ..	72,619	30,385	54,182	1,57,588	2,06,790	1,30,557	1,39,164	1,36,074
1.	Cases compromised ..	16,692	6,477	9,141	24,928	49,531	34,912	35,301	46,850
2.	Cases decreed exparte ..	5,177	2,703	4,045	10,788	23,080	15,426	14,536	16,068
3.	Dismissed ..	617	2,570	3,402	11,860	4,977	16,473	16,741	22,384
4.	Cases decided ..	18,109	7,891	11,560	58,825	36,905	21,950	21,255	33,095
5.	Transferred to other courts ..	7,419	1,999	4.310	14,530	6,981	2,377	1,909	1,331
6.	Cases referred by parties after mutual agreement though out side jurisdiction ..	625	1,189	600	1,464	8,102	1,810	1,168	1,131
	Total disposal ..	48,606	22,829	33,058	1,22,395	1,29,576	92,948	90,910	1,20,853
	Cases pending ..	24,013	7,556	21,124	35,193	77,214	37,609	48,254	15,215
	Cases stayed ..	..	..	..	1,160	..	..	..	838

S. No.	Cases	Revenue 1-4-51 to 31-3-52	1-4-52 to 31-3-53	1-4-53 to 31-3-54	1-4-51 to 31-3-52
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	(a) Revision filed ..	3,197	1,889	2,031	3,546
	(b) Percentage of total disposal ..	14%	5.7%	1.6%	4.5%
2	(a) Revision allowed ..	1,271	823	918	1,462
	(b) Percentage of total disposal ..	5%	2.5%	0.7%	1.5%

NOTE :—Information of one quarter, i.e., 31-3-1953 for five districts are not

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Criminal 1-1-'50 to 31-3-'51	1-4-'51 to 31-3-'52	1-4-'52 to 31-3-'53	1-4-'53 to 31-3-'54	Total 1-1-'50 to 31-3-'51	1-4-'51 to 31-3-'52	1-4-'52 to 31-3-'53	1-4-'53 to 31-3-'54	Grand Total 1-1-'50 to 31-3-'54
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
..	..	..	78,150	..	..	..	1,47,528	..
..	..	..	4,028	..	..	..	9,623	..
..	..	..	5,620	..	..	..	29,804	..
..	..	..	1,31,965	..	..	..	3,26,470	..
3,54,093	2,30,625	2,22,672	2,19,763	6,33,502	3,91,567	4,16,018	5,13,425	14,25,310
78,523	65.905	59,517	75,125	1,44,746	1,07,294	1,03,959	1,46,903	5,02,902
32,428	21,779	17,638	20,571	60,625	39,908	36,219	47,427	1,84,179
9,863	33,634	30,391	44,813	15,457	52,677	50,534	79,057	1,97,725
47,631	32,525	30,477	45,915	1,02,645	62,366	63,292	1,37,835	3,66,138
14,844	5,284	4,549	3,741	29,244	9,660	10,768	19,602	69,274
3,827	3,193	1,950	1,333	12,581	6,192	3,718	3,928	26,419
1,87,116	1,62,320	1,44,522	1,91,498	3,65.298	2,78,097	2,68,490	4,34,752	13,46,637
1,66,977	68,305	78,150	28,265	2,68,204	1,13,470	1,47,528	78,673	78,673
..	..	..	1,713	..	..	..	3,711	3,711

Civil 1-4-52 to 31-3-53	1-4-53 to 31-3-54	Criminal 1-4-51 to 31-3-52	1-4-52 to 31-3-53	1-4-53 to 31-3-54	Total 1-4-51 to 31-3-52	1-4-52 to 31-3-53	1-4-53 to 31-3-54	Grand Total 1-4-51 to 31-3-54
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
2,753	2,762	10,015	7,810	8,075	16,758	12,452	12,868	42,078
3%	2.2%	9%	5.4%	4.2%	6%	4.6%	2.9%	4.2%
1,036	1,180	4,142	3.504	3,730	6.875	5,363	5.828	18.066
1.2%	0.9%	4.5%	2.4%	1.9%	2.4%	2%	1.3%	1.8%

included in the above statement.

acquisition of their rights by the State, they are left with their *sir* or *khudkasht,* buildings, trees, wells, etc. All other land in the villages of U.P. now belongs to either the cultivators or grove-holders or to the Gaon Samaj. While the land included in the holding or grove of a *Bhumidhar* or *Sirdar* will belong to him, the Gaon Samaj will have the right to file a suit of ejectment against him if they contravene any provision of the law or encroach on lands of common utility. It has further been provided that if the right of the tenure-holder is extinguished in the holding or grove, the land shall become vacant land and the Gaon Samaj shall become its owner. It is, therefore, likely that the Gaon Samaj will, in course of time, have larger and larger areas under its control.

The Gaon Samaj will be the *Chhetrapati* of such land as also land held by the *asamis.* The following will be the *asamis* of the Gaon Samaj :

Persons who, on the date immediately preceding the date of vesting, held land as non-occupancy tenants of pasture land, land covered by water and used for the purpose of growing *singhara* or other produce, land in the bed of a river and used for casual or occasional cultivation, land declared by the State Government to be used for *taungya* plantation or to be part of tract of shifting or unstable cultivation. These *asamis* will pay rent to the Gaon Samaj and can be ejected by it. Besides, the Gaon Samaj has been given the right over lands in *abadi* which are not appurtenant to buildings belonging to village inhabitants. In due course, rights over *hats, bazars, melas,* etc., giving an income of less than Rs. 2,000 a year will be given over for management to the Gaon Samaj. All such rights of the Gaon Samaj over village lands will be exercised by the Land Management Committee. The *Manual* directs that generally the existing customs should be allowed to continue. Rights exercised free of charge before zamindari abolition may be allowed to continue free of charge. Previous sources of *sayar* income should be maintained but, as far as possible, the customary rates should not be increased.

A very useful aspect of the *U.P. Gaon Samaj Manual* is the manner in which it directs the utilisation of uncultivated land of the village. It has been directed that in villages in which the uncultivated area is 10 per cent or less of the total area of the village, the uncultivated land shall be reserved for planned use, i.e., for fuel plantation, fruit orchards, pastures, compost pits, etc. Where, however, the uncultivated land is in excess of 10 per cent of the total area of the village, and is cultivated or capable of cultivation, the excess may be let out by the Land Management Committee, and the rest should be utilised for purposes mentioned above.

The Land Management Committee shall allot *abadi* sites in the *abadi* or in the waste land in the area vested in the Gaon Samaj for the purpose of construction of buildings. First preference will be given to landless agricultural labourers living in the circle. The *Manual* lays down elaborate rules for auctioning the land for house construction, but these, we feel, require to be amended in so far as the procedure laid down may, in effect, deprive the penniless landless labourer of the benefits of this provision.

The *Manual* lays down elaborate directions for the management of *hats, bazars, mela* grounds, and tanks, ponds, fisheries and water channels by the Land Management Committee. As for the admission of new cultivators over vacant lands, the priority list laid down gives first preference to landless agricultural labourer, or an *asami* residing in the circle who does not hold any land as *Bhumidhar, Sirdar,* or *Adhivasi.* In case no such person of this class is available, the land may be given to a *Bhumidhar, Sirdar* or *asami* who has less than 6¼ acres or 10 standard bighas of land in the circle of the Gaon Samaj. In case no one of this class comes forwar to take the land, it may be given to a co-operative farm (if any) established within the circle of the Gaon Samaj.

The revenue which would be fixed by the Land Management Committee for such land shall be not less than the rent at the hereditary rates and shall not be more than double of such amount. If the land is given to a co-operative farm, the rent shall not be less than 3|4th of the rent at hereditary rates and shall not be more than the rent at hereditary rates.

The *Manual* directs that the Land Management Committee shall maintain the following records :

1. Records of all its property.
2. Proceedings book.
3. Counterfoils of leases of admission to land.
4. Other leases or licences given by it.
5. *Jamabandi* of *asamis* of Gaon Samaj.
6. Demand and collection register.
7. Receipt books.
8. Cash book.
9. Register of expenditure.

Lawyers at tehsil levels will help the Committee in its litigation uits. In case of bad work, the Committee can be superseded. Its vork will be regularly checked up by the Sub-Divisional Officer and is assistants.

Success of the U. P. Experiment: Constructive work done by Panchayats

Under the U.P. Panchayat Raj Act of 1947, 34,755 Gao Panchayats were established in Uttar Pradesh on Independenc Day (August 15) 1949. A new era of direct democracy thu dawned. Notwithstanding adverse criticism from certain quarter this big experiment in decentralised democracy proved a grea success. It brought in new enthusiasm in the countryside. Despit the initial defects and failures, the Act succeeded in organisin rural people in appropriate units, removed their narrow outlook an made them think and act in terms of a larger brotherhood. Th was most significantly expressed in the village people voluntaril getting together to work unitedly for common good and offe *Shramdan*. The *Shramdan* drive in U.P. has achieved signa success. Table 26 (pp. 316-317) shows the constructive work don by U.P. Panchayats between March 31, 1951 and March 31, 1954.

Thus, out of the total constructive work completed of a valu of Rs. 9,57,81,669, the greater portion, Rs. 5,87,29,745, was contr buted by *Shramdan*.

Report Of the U. P. Panchayat Raj Amendment Committee, 1954

In spite of the extremely good work done by the Panchaya and the essential success of the Panchayat Raj plan, the experienc gained in the process necessitated changes in the Act with a vie to remove the shortcomings and difficulties noticed in working a experiment of so vast and unprecedented a nature. The Act wa amended once in 1950 and twice in 1952, mainly for securing th services of the secretaries, extending the term of Panchayats five years and validating a large number of judgements of Pancha yati Adalats, following a pronouncement of the High Court. Apa from this, certain other changes in the fast changing map of ne India necessitated an overhauling of the 1947 Act. Thus, fo example, with the enforcement of the Republican Constitution, became necessary to change the Act in respect of provisions regar ing franchise, and devolution of power implied in Section 40 of th Constitution, which lays down that Panchayats should be develope as basic units of local self-government. Similarly, the enforc ment of the U.P. Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms A brought in its trail a reduction of Panchayat income. The ta levied by Panchayats on proprietors and under-proprietors w rendered inoperative. Similarly, by the acquisition of *bhumidho* rights by a large number of cultivators and consequent reduction their revenue dues, the yield from tax on rents declined to appreciable extent. The creation of Land Management Committees which were supposed to act as sub-committees of Gaon Panchayats, but actually functioned independently under an altogether different department of the Government, also created confusion and complications and adversely affected Panchayat income from public lands. Accordingly, the State Government appointed a Committee in early 1953 with Shri Mohan Lal Gautam, then U.P.'s Minister for Local Self-Government, as Chairman, to go into all the questions and submit its Report. This Report[1] went into all the questions involved and is, on the whole, a valuable addition to the mass of Panchayat literature published in India in the course of the last few years. Mainly on the basis of the recommendations of this Committee, a U.P. Panchayat Raj (Amendment) Bill was introduced in the State Legislature on March 29, 1954, and referred to a Select Committee which reported on April 19, 1954. It was later passed by the State Assembly on May 15, 1954.

Amendment Of The U.P. Panchayat Raj Act In 1954: A Detailed Review

Uttar Pradesh was the first State in the Indian Union to undertake a comprehensive Panchayat legislation and has the credit of working this experiment in decentralised democracy on an unprecedented scale. The U.P. Act, in fact, later became the model for other identical State legislations. Based as the 1954 Amendment of the U.P. Panchayat Raj Act was on experience gained in the course of four years and more, we take the liberty of reviewing it in some detail. In this review, we shall first note the provisions initially put forward by the Bill, then examine the amendments suggested by the Select Committee, and finally view the additions made during the House discussions.

The Bill brought the membership of Gaon Sabhas fully into line with similar provisions of the Representation of the Peoples Act. Gaon Sabha membership will now be open to all adults residing in the area of a Gaon Sabha, except those who are not citizens of India or are of unsound mind. Amongst the disqualifications for holding office in Gaon Panchayats, the Assembly has also provided for the inclusion of convictions under the U.P. Removal of Social Disabilities Act, 1947, and the Essential Supplies (Temporary Powers) Act, 1947. The former prohibits the practice of untouchability and the latter is designed to punish blackmarketing.

As regards the reservation of seats for minorities, the Bill abolished all reservation except those for Scheduled Castes,

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[1] Report of the U.P. Panchayat Raj Amendment Act Committee, Lucknow, 1954.

TABLE

S. No.	Head	From the beginning to 31st March, 1951	1-4-1951 to 31-3-1952	1-4-1952 to 31-3-1953
	1	2	3	4
1.	**Panchayat Ghars :**			
	Kachcha	1,274	736	365
	Received in Donation	856	484	340
2.	**Gandhi Chabutras :**			
	Pucca	3,672	2,868	700
	Kachcha	24,173	15,095	2,668
	Converted from Kachcha into Pucca	..	..	363
3.	Libraries	6,112	830	1,797
4.	Radios		(1,002)	570
5.	Akharas and Gymnasiums	44,430	35,828	13,337
6.	**Roads (constructions) :**			
	Pucca (in miles)	218	252	305
	Kachcha (in miles)	1,290	1,529	5,529
	Converted from Kachcha into pucca (in miles)	..	520	128
	Pucca	861	611	378
7.	**Road (Repairs) :**			
	Pucca (in miles)	973	178	270
	Kachcha (in miles)	1,209	2,238	5,979
8.	**Drains (construction) :**			
	Pucca (in miles)	16	48	80
	Kachcha (in miles)	222	133	447
9.	**Drains (Repairs).—**			
	Pucca (in miles)	..	22	9.5
	Kachcha (in miles)	..	136	131
10.	Lanterns	4,931	10.079	13,294
11.	Medicine Chests	..	5,000	4,082
12.	Maternity Boxes	..	..	51
13.	Bunds	..	..	131
14.	Persian Wheels	..	..	41
15.	**Wells for irrigation construction :**			
	Pucca	..	..	5,117
	Kachcha	..	..	7,724
16.	Wells (Repairs)	..	..	6,961
17.	**Wells (cleaning) :**			
	Pucca	..	..	15,505
	Kachcha	..	..	12,659
18.	Converted from Kachcha into pucca	..	..	2,078
19.	**Wells for drinking purposes (construction) :**			
	Pucca	..	..	15,978
	Kachcha	..	..	11,748
20.	Converted from Kachcha into Pucca	14,134	12,878	2,670
21.	**Wells (repairs) :**			
	Pucca	23,547	23,475	5,831
	Kachcha	12,279	13,761	4,759
22.	**Wells (cleaning) :**			
	Pucca	51,745)	88,612	21,352)
	Kachcha	68,443)		9,799)

1-4-53 to 31-3-54	Total	Valuation		Total Value
		Shramdan	Money	
5	6	7	8	9
594	2,444	24,44,000	97,76,000	1,22,20,000
419	2,794	27,94,000	13,97,000	41,91,000
156	1,836	..	..	..
848	9,088	9,08,800	4,54,400	13,63,200
2,239	44,175	44,17,500	..	44,17,500
293	658	..	..	..
1,052	9,791	..	4,89,550	4,89,550
755	2,327	..	6,98,100	6,98,100
9,925	1,03,520	1,03,52,000	20,70,400	1,24,22,400
274	1,049	10,49,000	31,47,000	41,96,000
5,627	13,975	27,95,000	..	27,95,000
410	1,058	..	..	..
1,218	2,639	..	..	..
10,435	19,861	8,93,745	..	8,93,745
105	249	..	..	..
339	1,141	..	..	..
16	475	..	..	..
251	518	..	..	..
16,189	44,493	..	8,00,874	8,00,874
5,678	14,760	..	..	..
..	51	..	..	..
271	402	..	..	..
111	152	..	..	..
4,441	9,558	19,11,600	1,43,37,000	1,62,48,600
5,845	13,569	13,56,900	..	13,56,900
6,315	13,276	..	..	..
15,676	31,181	..	..	..
6,549	19,208	..	..	..
1,802	3,880	..	..	..
3,430	19,408	2,91,12,000	38,81,600	3,29,93,600
2,156	13,904	6,95,200	..	6,95,200
1,359	31,041	..	..	..
6,460	59,313	..	..	..
2,622	33,421	..	..	..
16,157)	2,62,301	..	..	..
6,493)		..	..	..
Total (in rupees)		5,87,29,745	3,70,51,924	9,57,81,669

who were provided representation in Gaon Panchayats in propo tion to their population in the Gaon Sabha. The Select Committe further provided that the reservation would hold good till Januar 26, 1960, as envisaged under the Constitution.

The amendment relating to age and literary qualifications the *Pradhan* of a Gaon Sabha laid down that he would be a perso not below 30 years of age and must be able to read and write Hin in Devnagari characters. This provision was meant to ensure sele tion of experienced and literate men to this important office, wh would be able to keep away from factional politics and would abl discharge their responsibilities which had enormously increased wti the abolition of zamindari and the implementation of variou schemes under the Five-Year Plan by Gaon Sabhas. The provisio was, however, deleted by the Assembly as Scheduled Caste members apprehended that it would adversely affect the choice *Pradhans* from their community. The concensus of opinion amon members in general was that as there was no such qualificatio for the members of the State or Union Legislatures, who were entitled to hold the highest offices in the land, or in case of the chair men of other local bodies, it was unjust to prescribe such qualifications in case of the Gaon Panchayat alone.

The provision for filling in by nomination vacancies caused du to the failure of a Gaon Sabha to elect the full quota of its member was also modified by the Select Committee. It was considered t be an extreme measure adopted only in extraordinary circumstances. The Select Committee, therefore, provided that tw opportunities should be given to Gaon Sabha to elect the full numbe of members before the State Government, or such authority as ma be prescribed, might proceed to fill in the remaining vacancies b nominations.

The provision laying down the term of the Gaon Panchaya and the Nyaya Panchayat and its renewal was visualised to spar the rural population, which has to participate in elections to th Union and State Legislatures and to the District Boards, the inconvenience of participating in too many elections to give them sufficient time to carry through their policies as well as provide fo pressing administrative exigencies.

The Joint Select Committee took the view that a continuou process of renewals was not democratic and hence provided tha extension of the term of Panchayats should be for one year onl so that the life of these bodies did not exceed six years in all.

The provision regarding election petitions will be admissibl only if it is alleged that the corrupt practices or bribes or undu influence have prevailed at any election. Such petitions may also be disposed of summarily.

Jurisdiction of civil courts to entertain any such petitions has been barred. This amendment was felt necessary because no similar provision existed in the Panchayat Raj Act, 1947, and civil courts took a long time in deciding such cases.

The provision in the Bill for the transfer of Gaon Panchayat staff on State basis was made with a view to improving their efficiency and to meeting the growing demand of local bodies in this respect.

Powers and functions of the Panchayats are already very wide. The Bill authorised the Panchayats to run Homoeopathic dispensaries in addition to Ayurvedic, Unani and Alopathic ones. They were also being authorised to have a hand in the appointment and transfer of *chowkidars*.

Taxation Proposals

Under the principal Act, land taxes, a tax on trades, professions and callings and an alternative tax on buildings had been provided for. The yield from these taxes was indeed very inadequate for the due performances of their duties by the Gaon Sabhas, and a number of new taxes, fees and rates were proposed in the Bill which the Gaon Sabhas could levy in addition to the taxes they could collect under the principal act.

Main amendments proposed by the Bill with regard to Panchayat finances contained provision for a number of new taxes, fees, and service rates, provision for the contribution of physical labour by male members of the Gaon Sabha in the execution of works of public utility, provision of remission of taxes by the State Government during emergency, and provision for empowering the Gaon Panchayats to collect dues on behalf of any local authority in addition to the State Government.

New taxes and fees include a small tax on owners of animals and vehicles plied for hire; tax on cleaning private latrines and drains through the agency of Gaon Sabha; a fee on petty itinerant traders who do not pay the trade tax; a fee on the registration of sales of animals, a fee on the use of slaughter houses and encamping grounds and service rates on supply of water and provision for lighting where these are arranged by the Gaon Sabhas entirely at their own option.

The imposition of a lighting rate by the Gaon Sabha was strongly disfavoured by the Assembly and was dropped from the list of rates and taxes available to the Gaon Panchayats.

The rigour of the tax on trade, callings and professions, which could theoretically at least extend to Rs. 250 per annum per assessee, was proposed to be wholly abolished and a small fee on trades, callings and professions, of which the ceiling had been fixed at Rs. 6 per annum, was proposed in its place.

A special provision was made in the Bill for levy of a fee not exceeding Re. 1 per day on cinemas stationed temporarily in a Gaon Sabha.

It was also proposed to bring the taxes in the Bill into conformity with the provisions of the Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act, 1950. In this connection, the Joint Select Committee made zamindars in non-zamindari abolition areas liable to the payment of land tax where they actually cultivated land.

A "Labour Tax" was sought to be raised by providing for the contribution of compulsory physical labour by the members of Gaon Sabhas in the execution of works of public utility in their areas. It was felt that manpower was the real asset of the rural areas and could usefully be employed in the execution of works of public utility in preference to raising of taxes. The provision was, however, deleted by the Select Committee, mainly to encourage and augment the interest and enthusiasm shown by the people of rural areas in the contribution of physical labour.

It was proposed to empower the State Government to remit taxes levied by a Gaon Sabha in prescribed circumstances. The Joint Select Committee enlarged the scope of this power so as to allow the prescribed authority and also the Gaon Sabha to remit taxes imposed by the Gaon Sabha with retrospective effect.

This will enable the State Government as well as the Gaon Sabhas to remit Panchayati taxes in case of natural calamities as also in cases of faulty assessments.

In the principal Act, power was given to the Gaon Panchayat to enter into contract with the State authorities to collect any taxes or dues payable to the State Government on suitable commission. In the Bill it was proposed that Gaon Panchayats also should have the power to enter into such contract with any local authority for the collection of latter's dues. In view of the present meagre finances of Panchayats, the necessity of the proposal is obvious.

Amendment Of Provisions Regarding Judicial Functions

Amendments originally proposed by the Bill in respect of Panchayati Adalats—now given the more dignified name of Nyaya Panchayats—contained provisions for the nomination of Panches

om an elected panel; formation of permanent benches; withdrawal
certain offences of an intricate nature from the jurisdiction of
dicial Panchayats; enlargement of their jurisdiction with refer-
ce to certain offences under IPC and other Acts, conferring wider
wers on Nyaya Panchayats showing outstanding performance;
thdrawal of the power of Sarpanches to demand security for
eping peace; powers to Nyaya Panchayats to punish contempt of
eir authority and extended powers to revisional courts in respect
transfer and judgement of cases.

Necessity for the nomination of the Panches of judicial Pancha-
ts arose because of the objection raised in various quarters
ainst the system of elected judiciary. In view of the commend-
le work done by these Panchayati Adalats, it was not thought
pper to abolish the system altogether but a middle course was
opted and provision was made in the Bill to combine the advant-
es of the methods of election and selection in the choice of
nches of Nyaya Panchayat by visualising the election of a panel
members for the Gaon Panchayat and Nyaya Panchayat simul-
neously, out of which the prescribed authority would select the
quisite number of Panches for the Nyaya Panchayat, and the
maining members of the panel were proposed to be members of
Gaon Panchayats.

The formation of fixed benches of Nyaya Panchayats was
posed in the Bill in order that Nyaya Panchayats may dispense
tice according to fixed and known programme so as to reduce
nces of corruption and favouritism.

Under the principal Act, these authorities had no power to
dify the decisions and judgement of the Nyaya Panchayats. They
ld either accept in toto or reject them altogether. In actual
rking, this state of affairs was not found conducive to the deve-
ment of the Nyaya Panchayats. The Bill empowers these
ising authorities to transfer cases from one bench of adalat to
ther or to their own court and to modify the decisions, if
essary. They have been now empowered to remand such cases
Nyaya Panchayats for retrial in accordance with their directions.
minimise the danger of misuse of such powers, the existing
vision of fine for filing false and frivolous applications before
revising authorities is being retained.

Every court has got power to punish its contempt and dispose
uch proceedings on the day of occurrence. The Nyaya Pancha-
were also being authorised to take action on such contempt and
ne such persons a sum not exceeding Rs. 5 per day of default.

Offences under Sections 279, 286 and 336 IPC, which under
principal Act were cognisable by Panchayati Adalats, were pro-

posed in the Bill to be withdrawn from their jurisdiction and only especially empowered Panchayats were contemplated to have the power to take cognizance of these offences. This amendment was proposed because it was felt that these offences were of an intricate and important nature and required for their disposal considerable legal knowledge.

New offences added to the jurisdiction of Panchayati Adalats include those under Sections 431 IPC, 13 of Public Gambling Act and 26 of the Cattle Trespass Act. In case of Sections 431 and 477 IPC, a concurrent jurisdiction both of Nyaya Panchayat and regular court has been provided.

The Joint Select Committee spent considerable time in deliberating upon the desirability of allowing Nyaya Panchayats to take cognizance of offences under Sections 379 and 411 IPC and, as a safeguarding measure, conferred on the State Government the power to withdraw any offence from cognizance of Nyaya Panchayats, either generally or in the case of particular Nyaya Panchayats.

The Joint Select Committee also provided that the period of limitation in revisions arising out of cases in which proceedings had been taken *ex-parte* against the applicant in the Nyaya Panchayats should be reckoned from the date of the knowledge of the order by the applicant where in the proceedings before the Nyaya Panchayats personal service had not been effected on them.

Under the principal Act, a sum realised by way of court fees and fines was to be handed over by the State Government to the Gaon Sabha in equal proportion for meeting the expenses of the Panchayati Adalats. The Bill provided that all the proceeds from court fees and fines shall be credited to the State Government. This provision had been made in view of the fact that the State Government had taken upon itself the responsibility of paying the salaries of the secretaries of Gaon Panchayats throughout the State. The proposal contained in the Bill, however, came in for much criticism and the Joint Select Committee made the amendment that the State Government shall pay to the Gaon Sabha concerned such portion not exceeding 50 per cent out of the sums realised by way of court fees and fines as it may fix for the expenses of the Nyaya Panchayat.

Panchayat Elections Of October-December 1955: A Review

As we have stated in the beginning of this Chapter, in accordance with the provisions of the amended Panchayat Raj Act, in the last fortnight of December, the State became engaged in a gigantic electoral undertaking in which more than 2,00,00,000 adult villagers in 41 districts were called upon to exercise their franchise to choose presidents and members of about 55,000 Panchayats. The elections followed those held in the five hill districts in October-November. Polling for 12,929 Panchayats in the eastern districts of Azamgarh, Basti, Gorakhpur, Deoria and Ballia, which had not recovered from the ravages of floods and where the administration was engaged in relief work, was postponed to February. About 70,000 people were drafted to conduct the polling which was fixed for different days in various sectors into which districts were divided for administrative convenience[1]. These Village Panchayats, numbering about 73,000 representatives of nearly 1,44,000 rural constituencies began a five year term from the beginning of the new financial year under the new Act.

The polling was held by show of hands at public meetings. An analysis of the nominations showed that the contest was keener for the office of the *Pradhans* (presidents) of Panchayats which carries considerable influence. On the other hand, membership of Panchayats went abegging at many places and by-elections will have to be held to fill vacant seats.

The Government received about 500 representations against decisions on nomination papers, but it was decided not to intervene. There might have been cases where nomination papers were wrongly rejected, but it was felt that intervention would mean inviting more trouble by opening the way for calling into question nomination papers held valid. The number of invalid nominations was large because of the difficulty of proving age (minimum fixed at 30 years for candidates for presidentship) and of the condition that tax arrears would disqualify a candidate. It is estimated that Panchayat taxes are in arrears to the extent of about 70 per cent.

A heartening example of women's interest came from Dhawaka village in Mau tehsil in Jhansi District where there were 22 candidates, including 19 women, for 19 seats. Women seemed determined to make it their own Panchayat. Reports of similar interest by village women was received from other parts of the State as well.

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[1] An idea of the magnitude of the elections at the district level would be had from the following report from Kanpur, dated December 15, 1955 : "More than 1,00,000 people, including 30,000 women, went to 280 polling stations to elect 152 Gram Sabhas and 30 Nyaya Panchayats in Kanpur district on the opening day of polling on Tuesday. No less than 99 per cent of the voters are estimated to have gone to the polls. The Panchayat elections will conclude on December 28. There are 6,56,979 voters, including 2,04,000 women, in the district. There are 3,062 constituencies which will elect 1,525 Gram Sabhas, 1,525 *Pradhans*, 192 Nyaya Panchayats and 28,300 members. The number of members elected unopposed is 11,901 and that of *Pradhans* returned uncontested 554. There are still to be elected 12,878 members and 961 *Pradhans*." (Hindusthan Times Evening News, 15-12-55).

Nyaya Panchayats will be formed later by official nomination from among members of the Panchayats. On the last occasion they were elected. The new procedure is aimed to raise the Nyaya Panchayats above electoral conflicts without taking away from villagers their right to have their own Panches.

Conflict And Violence

The special correspondent of *The Hindustan Times* made the following significant observation on these elections:[1] "No political party is officially contesting the elections, but individual political workers and members of kisan organisations are taking active interest. Legislators have kept aloof because they cannot run the risk of taking sides within their own constituency. At most places the electorate is divided as between two strong men of the village, and often this division corresponds to the division on caste lines. The last elections saw lower castes and backward classes combine against the higher castes. This tendency is in evidence again." According to another report:[2] "In the Plains districts elections are not unanimous or unopposed. On the contrary, there exists serious conflict between factions, groups and individuals. Analysis of filed nominations shows that on an average there are three candidates for each seat." A report in this same paper from Kanpur, dated December 12, tells of the shooting in broad daylight of a candidate for the *Pradhan* office in Sajeti Police Station of the district. The report added : "As the elections draw near, the supporters of the candidates are intensifying propaganda on communal and caste lines as a result of which the atmosphere is becoming more and more bitter." In a letter to editor, published in *Arthik Sameeksha*,[3] from a correspondent of village Shahadgarhi, district Bulandshahar, severe allegations have been made about malpractices and bribery by Panchayat officials in the Village Panchayat elections and *lathis* and spears being drawn in the course of the elections, though it did not fortunately end in actual clash.

In fact, *The Hindustan Times* reported on December 23, 1955: "The current fortnight has become a period of vigil and prayer for the law and order authorities in U.P.....Reports received here speak of clashes, some of them involving deaths, in a number of districts including Kanpur, Mathura, Saharanpur, Bareilly and Barabanki. Some trouble was, of course, apprehended, considering the magnitude of the undertaking and the fact that these elections touch the rural population more intimately than those to the legislature and Parliament."

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[1] Hindustan Times, 23.12.'55

[2] Nav Bharat Times (New Delhi edition), 9.12.'55.

[3] Fortnightly Hindi journal of the A.I.C.C. Economic and Political Research Department, Vol. V, No. 6, Whole No. 96, dated January 7, 1956, p. 30.

The Proper Perspective: The Elections Of 1949

We are well aware of the fact that these, and similar reports in the press, have created a habit among certain quarters to generally condemn the Panchayats. Such wholesale condemnation is erroneous and even surprising. Very rightly did Dr. Kailash Nath Katju say :[1] "I am pained by the general habit of general condemnation of Panchayats in different quarters. The Panchayats are condemned almost with a relish. No attempt is made to go about in the villages and talk to the people about the advantages flowing from these Panchayats."

It is necessary that we view things in their proper perspective. The existence of conflicts in the villages of today is a carryover from the past; the wonderful thing is that these clashes, in the total picture of the unprecedented experiment carried through in Uttar Pradesh, have been so few and far between, and speak volumes for the methods adopted for a peaceful transformation towards a just social order. These conflicts were also expressed in a decisive manner in the U.P. Panchayat elections of 1949. The *Report of the Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee* gives the following vivid account of these elections :[2] "The conflict between the peasants and labourers also expressed itself in the organisation of communal organisations like the Triveni Sangh in the U.P. The *Ahirs, Kurmis* and *Kunbis,* who constitute a very substantial proportion of the labouring classes in the U.P. villages, claiming to be the three main streams of the countryside, joined together under the Triveni Sangh. This movement now comprises an even larger section of the labour population of the U.P. villages. Besides the *Ahirs, Kurmis* and *Kunbis,* the Shoshit Sangh has rallied under its banner the *Garariyas, Kachis, Kevats, Lohars, Telis, Kohars, Kahars, Naus, Dhobis, Chamars, Dharikars, Pasis, Musahars, Nats* and *Kols.* And even the *Ansaris,* the Muslim depressed classes in the U.P. villages, joined the movement. The growing Shoshit Sangh which, shorn of its various strappings, is essentially a movement of the pure landless labourers and agricultural labourers with tiny allotments against the landed peasantry, gained notable success in the U.P. Gaon Panchayat elections. Their chief slogan, according to Shri Sampurnanand (now U.P.'s Chief Minister), was against Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Lalas the classes who mainly constitute the landed peasantry :

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[1] Quoted from article entitled "Panchayats in Uttar Pradesh" in **National Herald,** dated August 15, 1955.

[2] **Report of the Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee, published by All India Congress Committee, 2nd Edition, 1951, pp. 138-9.**

Brahman Kshatriya Lala,
Inka Munh Kar Do Kala,
Inko de do Desh-Nikala".[1]

The coincidence between caste and property differences, in the background of an awakened Livelihood Class III, who is joined together by the large numbers of uneconomic holders, the cultivators of miserable plots of land, no more prepared to be ordered about and treated in the old way by the erstwhile 'upper' castes of the rural population, is apparent. It is in fact inherent in the situation. It is bound to express itself in village life, whatever programmes may be undertaken. Wisdom lies in not ignoring this conflict but to take energetic steps to deal with the situation, which in the final analysis, means quicker march to a just system of village society. To this aspect, however, we will have to refer again in Book Three. To quote Dr. Katju again : "We must not forget that we are living in a state of transition. The old order is changing, yielding place to a new pattern of society. It may be that village factions born of old conditions still persist, but I am sure that community life in rural areas will in future improve substantially and will become more harmonious."

"Panch's Stick Is On The Move"

The important thing is that community consciousness and functioning has commenced in a big way. The new idea in the village is thus expressed in a poem in the local dialect by a village poet, Bechan Ram, of district Mirzapur :[2]

Hark ye folks of the Panchayat,
Injustice will not now work,
Brother, it will not work,
The stick of the Panch is on the move.

Hear ye, Panch's stick is on the move,
I am an ignorant one, of little knowledge,
But I must praise the Panch,
How can I sing of the Panch,
Gandhi Baba has shown the way of our ancestors,
Has told us the essence of all the seven religions,

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[1] (Means)—Blacken the face of the Brahmin, the Kshatriya and the Lala and exile them.

[1] Rendered in English by the author from the original published in Panchayat Samachar (weekly bulletin published by U.P. Panchayat Raj Department) of October 1955.

By the fire of love get filled up with affection,
Build the palace of happiness and freedom;
That palace gives happiness to all,
The Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs or Christians;
They are all brethren of the same country,
The Panch's stick is on the move.

End this untouchability,
Fill up all ditches of differences,
The night will go, the morn would come.
Men and women must learn to read,
The skilful peasant should well till the land,
The village youth must sturdy be,
He must become an expert ironsmith,
He must a skilled potter be,
He must be a clever carpenter,
And a clever cultivator must he be,
Brother, Panch's stick is on the move.

If I say some more,
Please do not consider me a bore,
I see ahead Gandhi Baba's dream coming true,
I see that all will produce and all will eat,
And the question of 'mine' and 'thine',
Will no more be.
Look after the crippled and the maimed,
Not condemn a leper and scorn him,
This is Ram Raj, this is Panch Raj,
Herein lies the supremacy of Panch Raj,
The Panch's stick is on the move.

TABULAR REPRESENTATION II

No. of Villages & Panchayats etc.	Legislation passed	Amendment	Village Panchayats		Sources of Revenue
			How Constituted	Powers in Village Management	
Total No. of Villages 1,11,722 No. of Gram Panchayats 35,844 No. of Panchayati Adalats 8,435	U.P. Panchayat Raj Act 1947.	Ist Amendment of U.P. Panchayat Raj Act in 1950. Second Amendment in 1952 (U.P. Panchayat Raj Second Amendment Act.) U.P. Panchayat Raj ment Act Amend- 1954.	There shall be a Gaon Sabha for every village or a group of villages. All adults residing in an area shall be its members. Membership is lifetime. Executive body elected by the Gaon Sabha is known as Panchayat. No. of members is between 30 and 51. Election is held on the joint electorate system. Minorities will have representation on the Panchayat. There is a Gaon Sabha for every village or group of villages with a population of 1,000. There are thus single, two, three and more village Gaon Sabhas.	Functions of a Gaon Panchayat: Maintenance and improvement of public streets, lighting, medical relief, registration of deaths & births, promotion of education, sanitation, organisation of fairs & melas. Besides, there are some discretionary functions which the Panchayat may perform. Planting trees, improving the breed of cattle, organising a Village Volunteer Force for watch and ward, development of co-operation, relief against famine; construct new bridges and culverts, may effect improvement in sanitation; schools and hospitals. A Gaon Panchayat may enter into any contract with the State Govt. or other bodies to collect taxes, fees, cesses or other dues. Gaon Sabhas can acquire any land required for its purposes. It can also borrow money from the State Govt. for carrying out work under the Act.	In each Gaon Sabha there is a Gaon fund. Gaon fund shall consist of taxes levied under the Panchayat Raj Act; Govt. grants; sale proceeds of property such as dust, dirt, dung or refuse vested in the Panchayats; loans and gifts or contribution by other local bodies. Gaon Sabha can also levy some taxes, e.g., tax on the rent payable under the U.P. Tenancy Act, 1939 This could not be more than one anna in a Rupee. A tax on the assumed rental value of 'Sir' and 'khudkasht' (Self cultivated) land. A tax on trade callings and professions. A rate on buildings. Sources of revenue are Fees and Fines realised, donations, income from ponds, fisheries, management of public fairs.

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[1] This T.R. represents the position before the Panchayat Raj (Amendment) Act of 1954. The final figures for Gram and Nyaya Panchayats are not yet available since elections have been held up in some districts. The 1954 (Amendment) Act has been described in the Chapter.

PANCHAYAT INSTITUTION IN UTTAR PRADESH

Nyaya Panchayats		Report on the working of Panchayats		REMARKS
How Constituted	Powers	Gram	Nyaya	
Every Dist. is divided into circles in which many Gaon Sabhas are combined. Every Gaon Sabha elects five members to the Panchayati Adalat of the circle. The Sarpanch is elected by the elected Panches. Term of office is 3 years. There are 8,543 Panchayati Adalats in the State. Each covers an area of 4 to 5 Gaon Panchayats. There is a panel of 20 to 25 Panches in an Adalat.	Panchayati Adalats can try some specific criminal cases and civil suits or any other made cognizable by the Adalats. Sarpanch can ask any person to execute a bond of Rs. 100|- if any breach of peace is feared. The matter will then be tried by a bench. No Panchayat can inflict a substantive imprisonment. A fine of not more than Rs. 100|- may also be levied. Provision for compensation to the accused or complainant whoever is wrongfully implicated in a case. Panchayats may release offenders on probation suits for recovery; of money or movable property can be tried. Decisions shall not be binding on the question of title, legal character, contract or obligation. The Sub-Divisional Officer can revise judgement but there is no appeal against any order of the Panchayati Adalat. It cannot revise or alter its decisions. No legal practitioner is permitted. Panchayats have special powers in matter of compromise, etc. In case of a division of opinion the will of the majority prevails. The Munsif or Sub-Divisional officer has complete powers over the Panchayati Adalat. Fines imposed by it are recoverable through State Govt. aid. Expenses of Nyaya Panchayat to be a charge on Gaon Fund.	During the four years 948 miles of Pucca roads, 12,371 miles of Kuchcha roads were constructed. 32,134 wells were constructed and 31,005 converted from Kuchcha to Pucca. 7,000 Panchayat Ghars were constructed. Total work done by them is of the value of Rs. 9,43,41,472 of which Rs. 3,63,41,212 were contributed in cash. Nearly 200 miles of Pucca drains were constructed by Panchayats.	Since their formation 14,02,067 cases came before Nyaya Panchayats. Of this 13,29,295 were disposed off, 4,98,402 were compromised. In all 41,140 revisions were filed. This shows that Panchayati Adalats seem to have done much better than many people think.	The total land revenue of the State is Rs. 16 crores. The Village bodies can earn about one crore of rupees annually by way of commission, if this function is undertaken by them. The new bill which is before the Legislature contemplates to empower Panchayats to arrange for disposal of stray and wild cattle. Govt. may enhance the monetary valuation of suits that can be tried by a Panchayati Adalat from 100 to 500 rupees. In the new Bill it has been proposed to increase the powers of the Panchayati Adalats.

CHAPTER XII

WEST BENGAL

THE village in West Bengal is not the same as in other parts of the country. W. H. Thompson, the Superintendent for 1921 Census of Bengal wrote : "The word village in the sense in which it is ordinarily understood in India, and indeed in all parts of the world, should not be used without qualification in respect of rural Bengal."[1] The majority of the State population lives in the rural areas where straggling homesteads, each consisting of mud or mat-walled huts ranged round a courtyard and buried under a thick growth of shady trees, are spread all over. As Shri A. Mitra points out, this village or the *mauza* "consists of a parcel of land, the boundaries of which were defined either by the Revenue Survey in the middle of the nineteenth century or by later cadastral surveys. In West Bengal it is invariably the cadastral survey *mauza*. It usually bears the name of the main village or collection of houses found on it when the survey was made, but it does not necessarily correspond with the latter. It may contain only that one village, or it may contain a number of separate villages, or it may be uninhabited. In some cases the portion of the *mauza* which was inhabited at the time of the survey may have disappeared owing to the village or villages being abandoned, or it may be known by a different name, or new villages or groups of houses may have been established. The area and boundaries of the *mauza*, however, remain unchanged."[2] The *mauzas*, therefore, are a constant unit, but their size varies. In districts Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling and Cooch Behar, some *mauzas* are surprisingly large. But, as Mitra points out, a *mauza* is about three-fourths of a square mile, varying from one-half to one and a half square miles. Table[3] 27 (p. 331) compares the number of inhabited villages in each district of the State during 1941 and 1951.

Distribution Of Population In Villages

Population of the area now constituting West Bengal, according to the 1941 Census, was 2,10,37,295, of which 21.3 per cent was urban and 78.7 per cent rural. The 1951 Census returned a total population of 2,48,10,308 of which 61,53,263 or 24.8 per cent was urban, and 1,86,57,045 or 75.2 per cent rural. The fol-

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[1] Quoted from Census of India, 1951, Vol. VI, West Bengal, Sikkim and Chandernagore, Part I A-Report, by A. Mitra, I.C.S., Calcutta, 1953; p. 387.

[2] Ibid, p. 157.

[3] From Statement I, 22 on p. 158, Ibid.

TABLE 27

District	No. of inhabited villages 1941	1951
Burdwan	2,703	2,649
Birbhum	2,211	2,207
Bankura	3.522	3.525
Midnapur	10,711	10,517
Hooghly	1,908	1,906
Howrah	828	815
24-Parganas	4,025	3,846
Calcutta	..	..
Nadia	1,182	1,238
Murshidabad	1,897	1,901
Malda	1,415	1,577
West Dinajpur	2,334	2,303
Jalpaiguri	889	776
Darjeeling	578	605
Cooch Behar	1,400	1,198
TOTAL WEST BENGAL	35,603	35,063

lowing table[1] shows the number per 1,000 of rural population living in villages with (a) population of under 500, (b) 500-2,000, (c) 2,000-5,000, and (d) 5,000 and over, in 1951 :

TABLE 28

District	Under 500	500 to 2,000	2,000 to 5,000	5,000 and over
Burdwan	197	558	182	63
Birbhum	368	508	102	22
Bankura	518	439	39	4
Midnapur	488	430	76	6
Hooghly	240	552	193	15
Howrah	44	497	321	138
24-Parganas	140	576	225	59
Nadia	187	530	187	96
Murshidabad	152	457	307	84
Malda	249	473	238	40
West Dinajpur	608	360	32	..
Jalpaiguri	70	513	296	121
Darjeeling	246	424	155	175
Cooch Behar	254	563	155	28

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[1] Ibid, pp. 400-401; constructed from Statement II. 9.

Livelihood Pattern Of The Agricultural Classes

We will now briefly view the livelihood pattern of the agricultural population. As we have said earlier, the 1951 Census divided the agricultural classes into four categories : (I) Cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned and their dependents; (II) Cultivators of land wholly or mainly unowned and their dependents; (III) Cultivating labourers and their dependents; (IV) Non-cultivating owners of land, agricultural rent-receivers and their dependents. The distribution of the agricultural population of West Bengal in each of these four categories, expressed as a percentage of the total population of the State, would be found in the following table :[1]

TABLE 29

District	Total	All agricultural classes	I	II	III	IV	All non-agricultural classes
West Bengal	100	57.21	32.34	12.01	12.26	0.60	42.79
Burdwan	8.33	5.53	2.78	1.30	1.38	0.07	3.30
Birbhum	4.30	3.50	1.82	0.53	1.12	0.03	0.80
Bankura	5.32	4.35	2.75	0.53	1.04	0.03	0.97
Midnapur	13.54	11.06	6.93	2.22	1.83	0.08	2.48
Hooghly	6.26	3.67	2.00	0.76	0.86	0.05	2.59
Howrah	6.49	2.04	0.96	0.37	0.67	0.04	4.45
24-Parganas	18.58	9.93	5.24	1.91	2.67	0.11	8.65
Calcutta	10.27	0.09	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.07	10.18
Nadia	4.62	2.47	1.48	0.44	0.52	0.03	2.15
Murshidabad	6.92	4.78	2.87	0.73	1.14	0.04	2.14
Malda	3.78	2.69	1.59	0.62	0.47	0.01	1.09
West Dinajpur	2.90	2.48	1.39	0.78	0.30	0.01	0.42
Jalpaiguri	3.69	1.79	0.77	0.96	0.04	0.02	1.90
Darjeeling	1.79	0.57	0.38	0.16	0.03	0.00	1.22
Cooch Behar	2.71	2.26	1.36	0.70	0.19	0.01	0.45

The percentages of self-supporting persons, earning dependents, and non-earning dependents in each of the four agricultural livelihood categories for the rural population would be found in Table[2] 30 (p. 333).

A "Shocking Revealation"

In another table[3], A. Mitra has shown that population of earners in the agricultural livelihoods has come down from 23.4 per

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[1] Ibid, p. 357; constructed from Statement 1. 146.

[2] Ibid, pp. 344-5; from Statement I. 137.

[3] Ibid, Statement I. 149 on page 359.

TABLE 30

Livelihood Classes	Percentage of total population	Percentage of Col. 2 who are		
		Self-Supporting	Non-earning-dependents	Earning dependents
1	2			
I	42.4	23.3	73.0	3.7
II	15.7	25.1	69.8	5.1
III	16.0	34.0	61.3	4.7
IV	0.6	27.6	69.8	2.6
Total Agricultural Classes	74.7	26.0	69.8	4.2
Total non-agricultural classes	25.3	37.1	60.2	2.7
All Classes	100.0	28.8	67.4	3.8

cent of the total population in 1911 and 1921 to 18.5 per cent in 1931, and a bare 14.9 per cent in 1951. And he remarks : "This indeed is a shocking revealation....What is more alarming is the almost stationary proportion of the population in non-agricultural livelihoods since 1911 (17.7 per cent in 1911, 16.1 per cent in 1921, 14.3 per cent in 1931, and 16.6 per cent in 1951—*author),* which indicates how the excess population steadily squeezed out in increasing numbers from agriculture remains unabsorbed in non-agricultural livelihoods and goes on widening the fearful gap between the total population of employable age and the population employed in earning a living."

The Agricultural Labourers

The direct result of this would naturally be to increase the proportion of Livelihood Category III, i.e., the agricultural wage-earners with or without land. We are, therefore, not surprised to note the considerably higher percentage of agricultural labourers returned in some intensive official surveys. The results of a survey in 59 villages of West Bengal, conducted by the Union Ministry of Labour during 1950-51, gives the percentage of agricultural labour families as 24 per cent of the total number of families. The occupational classification of the families surveyed is given in the following table :[1]

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[1] Agricultural Wages in India, Vol. I, Op. cit., p. 179.

TABLE 31

Occupation and Status	Number of families	Percentage to Total no. of families
Agricultural owners	538	6.7
Agricultural tenants	3,202	39.6
Agricultural workers :		
(a) Without land	1,499)	18.0)
	) 1,986	) 24.0
(b) With land	487)	6.0)
Total Agricultural families	5,676	70.3
Total Non-Agricultural families	2,397	29.7
All Families	8,073	100.0

A Village Survey In 24-Parganas

An even higher percentage for agricultural wage earners was returned by yet another official survey. It relates to village Brindabanpur in Alipur sub-division in the district of 24-Parganas. The survey was conducted during June-November, 1949. Table[1] 32 (p. 335) shows the occupational classification of families in village Brindabanpur.

Thus, in village Brindabanpur, agricultural workers with or without land constituted 34.9 per cent of the total number of families, and 33.2 per cent of the total population of the village. It is obvious that the percentage return of agricultural labourers in West Bengal in the 1951 Census is lower than the actual. The explanation is given by A. Mitra. He says :[2] "Socially enjoying the lowest position among the agricultural classes, the landless wage earning labourer is inclined to return himself as an owner cultivator or at least a *bargadar* even if he has a few decimals of land to call his own, and this sentiment conceals to a certain extent his percentage strength among the agricultural classes."

The Position Of *Bargadars*

The estimate of the Woodhead Commission about the distribution of families living as *bargadars* and agricultural labourers in 1939-40 would be found in Table 33 (p. 335).[3]

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[1] Report on an Enquiry into the Conditions of Agricultural Workers in Villag Brindabanpur, West Bengal State, Ministry of Labour, Government of Indi Delhi; 1951, p. 21.

[2] Census of India 1951, Vol. VI, West Bengal, Sikkim and Chandernagore, Part IA Report; Op. cit., p. 95.

[3] Report of the Land Revenue Commission, Bengal, 1940, Vol. II, p. 117.

TABLE 32

Occupations	Total No. of families in the village	Percentage of families to total No. of families	Total No. of persons in all families	Percentage of persons in the families to the total No. of persons in all families
Agriculturists	72	48.3	376	51.8
1. Non-cultivating owners ..	..	..	..	..
2. Cultivating owners ..	1	0.7	6	0.8
3. Tenants :				
(a) Non-cultivating ..	14	9.4	86	11.9
(b) Cultivating partly owned and partly leased land ..	..	..	..	..
(c) Cultivating only leased land	5	3.3	43	5.9
4. Workers with some land :				
(a) attached	..	..	..	..
(b) casual	30	20.1	142	19.6
5. Workers without land :				
(a) attached	..	..	..	..
(b) casual	22	14.8	99	13.6
Non-Agriculturists ..	77	51.7	350	48.2
TOTAL ..	149	100.0	726	100.0

TABLE 33

District	No. of families enquired into	Living mainly or entirely as Bargadar		Living mainly or entirely on agricultural wages.	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Burdwan ..	803	219	27.3	322	40.1
Birbhum ..	727	94	12.9	288	39.6
Bankura ..	670	44	6.6	165	24.6
Midnapur ..	1,110	73	6.6	277	25.0
Hooghly ..	595	165	27.7	145	24.4
Howrah ..	336	91	27.1	105	31.2
24-Parganas ..	1,174	22	1.9	204	17.4
Nadia ..	830	56	6.7	300	36.1
Murshidabad ..	1,178	128	10.9	482	40.9
Malda ..	332	62	18.7	132	39.8
Dinajpur ..	1,020	141	13.8	230	22.5
Jalpaiguri ..	530	140	26.4	22	4.2
West Bengal ..	9,305	1,235	13.3	2,672	28.7

Says Shri Mitra : "It is quite likely that a percentage of 13.3 among the rural population of the districts of West Bengal in 1939-4 may have risen to 15.7 in 1951 on account of the intensification of the pressure on the soil, the impoverishment owing to the famine o small owner-cultivators some of whom were forced to sell their lan in order that they may live. *Prima facie,* therefore, there does not seem to be anything seriously wrong with the percentage of Livelihood Class II (sharecroppers) as thrown up by the Census of 1951 On the other hand, the Land Revenue Commission's findings o 28.7 per cent as living 'entirely as agricultural labourers'[1] seem t correspond with the recent Agricultural Labour Survey's findings o 24 per cent for West Bengal.[2] And Mitra has given the following table[3] to represent actual and estimated percentages of population in each agricultural livelihood class in West Bengal in 1951 :

TABLE 34

	Livelihood Class I		Livelihood Class II		Livelihood Class III		Livelihoo Class IV	
	Actual	Estimate	Actual	Estimate	Actual	Estimate	Actual	Esti-
WEST BENGAL	42.4	34.4	15.7	15.7	16.0	24.0	0.6	0.6

The Two Types Of Agricultural Labourers: Employment And Earning

There are two types of agricultural labourers in West Bengal. The first is the day labourer engaged only on a daily wage basis and paid in cash, and sometimes partly in cash and partly in food, but always for the day. The second type is the *kishan* labourer, wh is almost a permanent type of agricultural labour, employed on a yearly, monthly or a daily permanent basis, either residential or non-residential. This second type is usually employed by the resident rich peasantry, or *jotedar* or farmer as he is called, who cultivates his land partly by hired labour. But more frequently it is the well-to-do owner-cultivator who employs *kishan* labour. Of these labourers in West Bengal, 71 per cent of the families have no land, 26.0 per cent have less than 2 acres of land each, and only 2 pe cent have more than 2 acres each. Table 35[4] (p. 337) shows the percentage of agricultural labourers in families classified according to amount of land owned. The figures are for 1946-47, and, i anything, the situation would have subsequently deteriorated.

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[1] Ibid, p. 117, Note.

[2] Census of India; 1951, Vol. VI, Part IA-Report, Op. cit., pp. 459-460.

[3] Ibid, p. 460.

[4] Final Report of Inquiry into the Condition of Agricultural Labourers in Wes Bengal, 1946-47, p. 7; quoted by A. Mitra, Op. cit., p. 482.

TABLE 35

Cultivable land owned by agricultural labour family (in acres)	Percentage of agricultural labourers from families with principal occupation			
	Cultivation	Agricultural Labour	Non-Agricultural Labour	Total
0	31.5	71.0	73.3	57.9
0—2	36.8	26.0	20.4	28.9
2—5	23.7	2.5	5.3	10.1
5—10	7.1	0.1	0.7	2.6
10 and above ..	0.9	0.4	0.3	0.5
TOTAL	100	100	100	100

The following information about employment and earnings of agricultural wage-earners in West Bengal may be noted. 89 per cent of the total hired man-days were put in by men and the rest by women and children. Casual labourers accounted for 89.3 per cent of the wage-earners. A casual labourer was employed only for 238 days in a year. 55 per cent of the unemployment was due to want of work. Income from agricultural labour amounted to 65 per cent of total income of an average agricultural labour family. Non-agricultural labour contributed 16 per cent of total income. Wages were paid mostly on time rates and the predominant mode of payment was cash with perquisites. The average wage-rate weighted by man-days worked of the adult male worker on agricultural operations was Rs. 1-11-0. The daily wage-rate of the woman worker amounted to Rs. 1-0-6. The total income per family was Rs. 622. The average size per family for the State was 3.9 persons and the average earning strength 1.4. In round figures, 4 people have to live on about Rs. 50 a month.[1]

Permeation Of *Barga* In All Sizes Of Cultivation

As for the *bargadar* the sharecropper (Category II) constituting 15.7 per cent of the total population, Table 36 (p. 338) shows the percentage of land cultivated in *barga* in each class of holding by size in 1951.

The table makes clear the permeation of the *barga* in all sizes of cultivation, including holdings of even one and two acres. The miserable income from such cropsharing of the owner as also the *bargadar* can well be imagined. In holdings below 5 acres, *barga* cultivation extends to as much as about a sixth of the total, while

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[1] Vide Agricultural Labour Enquiry: Report on Intensive Survey of Agricultural Labour, Vol. III—East India, Government of India, Ministry of Labour, Delhi 1955; pp. 36-7.

TABLE 36[1]

Size of holding of owner-cultivator (1)	Percentage of Column (1) cultivated in *barga* (2)
0 — 1 acres	16.0
1 — 2 ,,	15.9
2 — 3 ,,	15.7
3 — 4 ,,	17.8
4 — 5 ,,	21.3
5 — 6 ,,	22.8
6 — 7 ,,	24.0
7 — 8 ,,	26.0
8 — 9 ,,	25.3
9 — 10 ,,	28.7
10 — 15 ,,	30.3
15 — 20 ,,	36.1
20 — 25 ,,	40.7
25 — 33-1|3 ,,	41.0
Over 33-1|3 ,,	55.3
TOTAL	20.3

in holdings between 5 and 10 acres, it covers as much as a quarter, and in holdings above 10 acres, between a third and more than a half.

The Plight Of The Owner-Cultivator

To complete our picture of West Bengal's rural society, it is now necessary to know how (leaving aside the Livelihood Categories III and II, that is the agricultural labourers and the sharecroppers, who constitute 24 and 15.7 per cent respectively of the total population, as also the non-cultivating owners constituting a bare .6 per cent) Livelihood Category I, that is cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned, fare in the agrarian economy. Information given by the Bengal Famine Commission regarding sizes of holdings cultivated by this Class in 1940 would be found in Table 37 (p. 339).

In other words, in 1940, 45 per cent of owner-cultivators, cultivated 3 acres and less, and 63.5 per cent had 5 acres and less, .30 per cent had 5 acres and above, and a bare 10.1 per cent cultivated 10 acres and above. The picture revealed by the Census of 1951 of percentage area held in different sizes of holdings would be found in Table 38 (p. 339).

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[1] Census of India, 1951, Vol VI, Part IA-Report, Op. cit., p. 481.

TABLE 37[1]

District	Average area per cultivating family in acres	Percentage of families with					
		Less than 2 acres	2-3 acres	3-4 acres	4-5 acres	5-10 acres	10 acres and above
Burdwan	5.63	28.6	10.9	8.9	10.8	26.6	12.8
Birbhum	4.64	15.1	10.1	7.4	8.5	19.2	8.2
Bankura	8.17	53.7	8.9	7.8	4.5	14.8	10.3
Midnapur	4.23	38.2	16.1	10.9	10.5	17.6	6.7
Hooghly	3.74	32.4	13.1	13.0	10.9	18.8	10.2
Howrah	3.53	53.2	14.3	5.1	4.5	17.5	5.4
24-Parganas	4.33	56.5	10.7	8.6	4.7	10.9	7.2
Nadia	4.83	16.8	9.6	10.8	10.1	20.3	11.8
Murshidabad	4.30	38.3	10.1	9.3	7.5	16.9	7.7
Malda	3.34	54.2	7.8	8.4	6.9	15.9	6.8
Dinajpur	6.38	24.2	8.9	11.1	10.2	28.3	15.0
Jalpaiguri	8.76	5.3	6.0	10.9	16.4	33.2	20.4
WEST BENGAL (Excluding Cooch Behar)	5.17	34.4	10.7	9.6	8.8	19.7	10.1

TABLE 38[2]

	Average area per agricultural family in livelihood category I in acres	Percentage of families with					
		Less than 2 acres	2-3 acres	3-4 acres	4-5 acres	5-10 acres	10 acres and above
WEST BENGAL (including Cooch Behar)	4.82	34.5	15.3	12.3	8.6	20.3	9.0

That is, nearly 50 per cent were cultivating 3 acres and less, and 70 per cent 5 acres and less, only 29.3 per cent holding more than 5 acres and a bare 9 per cent more than 10 acres.

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[1] Report of the Land Revenue Commission, Bengal, 1940, Vol. II, pp. 114-15.

[2] Census of India, 1951, Vol. VI, Part IA-Report, Op. cit., p. 479.

No Panchayat Legislation In West Bengal

West Bengal rural areas thus reveal a comparatively higher proportion of agricultural wage-earners and cropshares, and the uneconomic holders constitute the vast majority of cultivators. The existence, therefore, of conflicts within the village between the substantial cultivators on the one hand, and the other classes on the other, is easily understandable. The situation is further complicated by the fact that the *barga* system, permeated as it is more intensively in holdings below 5 acres, is a source of constant trouble among the poorer sections of the village. In such a set up, the organisation and functioning of Village Panchayats would naturally be a task full of difficulties, and would be an opportunity as also a challenge. A State-wide attempt in this direction would have been full of rich experience for India as a whole, but unfortunately so far there has been no legislation on Panchayats in the State. As on the question of land reforms, so also on the question of Panchayat organisation, West Bengal has remained behind most of the States of the Indian Union.

Position Of Panchayats Created By Executive Order

In the absence of Panchayat legislation, attempts have been made to set up Village Panchayats by executive orders, but the progress has been rather slow. "87 Village Panchayats were formed under executive orders where there was local response, and the formation of another 80 has been decided upon during the current year. The Panchayats that have been formed have been asked to take up rural welfare programmes suited to the locality with contribution raised locally and supplemented by grants from Government. In 1950-51, nearly Rs. 9,000 was disbursed as Government grants to Panchayats."[1] The position a year later was as follows : "Pending legislation, 97 Panchayats have been set up as an experimental measure in selected areas so that when legislation has been enacted these may be taken up first for the setting up of statutory Panchayats. Preliminary steps in connection with Panchayat legislation have been already undertaken and the Panchayat Bill is proposed to be introduced soon."[2] The position two years later was as follows : "There are 1,883 Union Boards whose members are all elected. It is proposed to replace these Boards gradually by Village Panchayats after the necessary legislation, which is under the consideration of the State Government, is enacted. Pending such legislation, 301 Village Panchayats have been set up by executive orders of Government in selected areas as an experimental measure."[1] We are not aware of the latest position, but most probably not more than 500 villages out of 35,063 villages of West Bengal have thus far been covered by Village Panchayats. These Panchayats are being formed in areas varying from 600 to 1,000 population, and comprise one or more than one village.

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[1] The Fourth Year of Freedom in West Bengal (August 15, 1950-51); Published by Director of Publicity, West Bengal, pp. 66-67.

[2] West Bengal : Independence Anniversary 1952; Published by the Director of Publicity, West Bengal; p. 111,

In the absence of Panchayat legislation, the present Village Panchayats in West Bengal have no statutory powers. The Panchayats are elected on the basis of adult suffrage at a general meeting of voters by show of hands. There is no provision for nomination. There is no executive officer of the existing Panchayats. The President is selected by the Panchayat Board elected by the village adults. No staff is appointed by the existing Panchayats.

The Village Panchayats formed by executive orders of Government are paid an initial Government grant of Rs. 140 each, and they can augment their income by voluntary contributions from the local people, both in the shape of money and also manual labour. Within the limited means at their disposal, these Panchayats have undertaken such works as improvement of village communications, village water supply, jungle clearance, education, etc.

In the absence of statutory backing, the existing Panchayats in West Bengal have no power to levy any tax. The basis of the present initial Government grant of Rs. 140 to each Panchayat is as follows : (i) Rs. 100 for rural welfare schemes; (ii) Rs. 20 for election expenses; (iii) Rs. 20 for stationery and contingent expenses.

The Union Board

The organs of local self-government for rural areas of West Bengal today are Union Boards and District Boards. A Union Board may comprise of ten to twenty villages. These were set up under the Bengal Self-Government Act V of 1919. The only tax compulsorily leviable is the Union rate. This rate is an assessment imposed yearly on persons who are owners and occupiers of buildings according to their circumstances and property within the Union. Section 54 of the Bengal Village Self-Government Act, 1919, makes a special provision for the imposition and collection of a supplementary assessment. This assessment is imposed when the amount collected from Union rate is found by the District Magistrate to be insufficient to meet the liabilities of the Union. Besides the Union rate, the following further items constitute the Union fund :

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[1] The Weekly West Bengal, Vol. 2 No. 43, dated August 19, 1954; (Published by the Director of Publicity, West Bengal); pp. 714-15.

(1) All sums realised as fines, fees or costs recovered under the Act, and donations or contributions from private persons;

(2) Rents or other income from works constructed by and vested in the Union Boards (Section 19);

(3) Licence fees at prescribed rates for carrying on any trade or business declared by the State Government to be offensive or dangerous (Section 34);

(4) Grants-in-aid from the district fund. The District Board may make such grant-in-aid as it thinks fit, to enable the Union Board to carry out any of the purposes of the Act on such conditions as the District Board may consider desirable, and shall do so if the Union Board imposes any rate under Section 37(b), i.e., for development work. It may be expected that when the proposed Panchayat legislation is enacted in West Bengal, the Union Boards may be disbanded, and the income of these Boards may be made over to the Village Panchayats. We have no idea of the income that may thus accrue to the Panchayats. It is clear, however, that the present initial grant of Rs. 140 is completely inadequate.

The Local Self-Government Department of the State Government looks after the Panchayat set-up today, and controls them through executive orders. The District Magistrate ensures that elections of Panchayat members and the President are held in accordance with these orders. He further sees to it that the accounts of Government grants and other public contributions are maintained properly and that the money is duly spent towards rural welfare schemes drawn up by the Panchayats. Beyond this general superintendence, the District Officer does not interfere in Panchayat activities, which obviously are of a limited type.

It would thus be seen that while the Panchayat institution and its development and growth has received considerable attention in other States, in West Bengal the matter has been considerably delayed. According to Press reports, however, a bill known as the West Bengal Panchayat Bill is now receiving the attention of the State Government and is likely to be enacted ere long. The scheme aims at initiating decentralised administration at the village and Union levels. It provides for the establishment of two kinds of Panchayats—the Gram Panchayat and the Anchal Panchayat. While Gram Panchayats will be constituted in every village, the Anchal Panchayat will consist of 7 or 8 villages covering more or less the present Union Board areas and will replace the Union Boards. The Anchal Panchayat will have both executive and judicial powers. They will be entrusted with the task of collecting land revenue and trial of petty cases. An officer belonging to the

State Service Cadre will be attached to every Anchal Panchayat, and he will be responsible for the discharge of work entrusted to it. The leader of the Gram Panchayat will be called *Pradhan,* while that of the Anchal Panchayat the *Anchal Mukhiya.* The number of Anchal Panchayats will be in the neighbourhood of 4,000. It is understood that initially all these Anchal Panchayats will be given a sum of Rs. 7,500 each for construction of their office buildings. An annual grant of Rs. 1,000 will also be given to each of them to meet their recurring expenditure.

CHAPTER XIII

ORISSA

ORISSA covers 60,136 square miles of territory with 23,000 square miles of forests, nearly 300 miles of sea-board, immense water and hydro-electric power, vast mineral deposits including coal, iron and manganese ores, bauxite, chromite and some 30 other occurrences of industrial value, and immense possibilities of pisci-culture, eri and ceri-culture, poultry farming and cattle breeding, in addition to its existing land produce which is already enough to permit of an exportable surplus of 1,00,000 tons of rice, etc. In 1936, the State of Orissa was comprised of 6 districts. The final territorial shape as it obtains today was acquired by the merger of 23 ex-states in 1948 and another in 1949. It now has 13 districts with a population of 1,46,45,946 according to the 1951 Census. The average density of population in Orissa is 244 per square mile, but there are vast regions with scant population, e.g., the districts of Phulbani, Koraput and Sundargarh, as also areas of extremely dense population, such as the Sadar sub-division of Cuttack or Berhampur subdivision of Ganjam, etc. These most thickly populated areas with a density of 750 and over to a square mile are confined to 3.2 per cent of the State's area accommodating 13.0 per cent of the population. Orissa has gained in density of population from decade to decade, as follows: 1901—117, 1911—189, 1921—186, 1931—208, 1941—229, 1951—244.

Yearning Of The Oriya Peasantry For Old Panchayats

Next to Bengal, Orissa was the worst sufferer under the depredations of early British rule, and, though rich in natural resources, the poverty of its population is heart-rending. The late Utkalmani Gopabandhu, in his famous book *Bandeer Atmakatha* has poured out his heart for the poor and down-trodden people of Utkal; the suffering peasant of Kanika; the poverty-stricken youngmen of the villages who wend their way in Bengal and Assam and other places for employment; the village maids who never have a piece of cloth to cover their bodies and never experience the blossoming of youth due to their utter poverty. The Orissa peasantry, traditionally conservative and having lived in well-functioning village communities for centuries till they were destroyed by foreign rulers, is noted for its simplicity, hospitality, non-excitability and good nature. The yearning of the Orissa peasant for the Panchayats which had ceased to be was expressed in an immortal poem entitled *Panchayat* by the great Oriya Poet Gangadhar Meher, who hailed from village Barpalli of Sambalpur district.

The Orissa Village: Distribution Of Population

The villages of Orissa are generally small in size. In settled areas the Census village is the *mauza*, the boundaries of which have been demarcated in survey and settlement operations. It may contain one or many groups of houses or hamlets, but there may be some few cases where there may be no houses. In unsurveyed areas, the group of houses paying Government revenue as a unit was taken as a Census village. In exceptional cases, where the above categories could not be applied, an aggregation of residential houses became the basis of the village. The following table[1] gives the distribution of population between villages of different sizes :

TABLE 39

Natural Division and Districts	Population per village	Per 1,000 of general population in villages	No. per 1,000 rural population in villages with a population of			
			5,000 & over	2,000 to 5,000	500 to 2,000	Under 500
ORISSA	290	959	1	43	439	517
Inland Division	257	972	2	36	398	564
Coastal Division	346	945	1	50	490	459
Cuttack	383	946	..	29	537	434
Balasore	278	962	..	32	402	566
Puri	295	952	4	45	398	558
Sambalpur	365	960	10	80	504	406
Ganjam	335	930	..	97	535	368
Agency	110	1,000	..	..	141	859
Plains	442	922	..	108	582	310
Koraput	211	957	..	20	305	675
Dhenkenal	321	967	..	65	513	422
Keonjhar	292	984	..	26	349	625
Phulbani	105	988	..	9	119	872
Bolangir	348	956	..	28	440	532
Sundargarh	329	972	..	23	466	511
Kalahandi	288	987	..	41	486	473
Mayurbhanj	279	991	..	13	335	652

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[1] Census of India, 1951, Vol. XI, Orissa, Part I-Report by M. Ahmed, Superintendent of Census Operations, Orissa, Cuttack, 1953; p. 169. The following may be borne in mind while perusing the Table : Orissa has two natural divisions, namely, Orissa Inland Division and Orissa Coastal Division. The Inland Division is formed of an extensive hinterland extending over the three well-defined tracts of Orissa, namely, the Northern Plateau, the Eastern Ghats and the Central Tract. This natural division comprises the administrative districts of Sambalpur, Ganjam Agency, Koraput, Dhenkenal, Keonjhar, Phulbani, Bolangir, Sundargarh, Kalahandi and Mayurbhanj and has an area of 46,052 square miles. The Orissa Coastal Division comprises the administrative districts of Cuttack, Balasore, Puri and Ganjam Plains only with an area of 14,075 sq. miles.

It follows that by far the largest percentage of rural population is confined to small and medium sized villages. Villages with a population of less than 500 comprise 51.7 per cent of the rural population while villages with a population of 500 to 2,000 contain 43.9 per cent. Large villages with a population between 2,000 and 5,000 claim only 4.3 per cent of the population. Villages with a population of more than 5,000 are negligible.[1]

Distribution Of Agricultural And Non-Agricultural Classes In Districts

Orissa is more agricultural in character than most of the Indian States. Persons belonging to the agricultural classes constitute four-fifths of the total population. Out of the total population of 146.5 lakhs, 116.1 lakhs, that is 79.3 per cent, belong to agricultural classes. Bihar and Vindhya Pradesh, with 86.0 and 87.1 per cent belonging respectively to the agricultural classes, may be said to be more agricultural than Orissa. The division of population of each district into agricultural and non-agricultural classes is shown in the following table,[2] the districts being arranged in order of their agricultural character :

TABLE 40

District	Total Agricultural Classes.	Total Non-agricultural Classes.
Keonjhar ..	.. 89.9	10.1
Mayurbhanj ..	.. 87.2	12.8
Sundargarh ..	.. 86.8	13.2
Balasore ..	.. 85.2	14.8
Kalahandi ..	.. 84.4	15.6
Dhenkenal ..	.. 83.7	16.3
Bolangir ..	.. 82.7	17.3
Sambalpur ..	.. 79.2	20.8
Phulbani ..	.. 79.0	21.0
Puri ..	.. 78.7	21.3
Koraput ..	.. 77.3	22.7
Cuttack ..	.. 74.9	25.1
Ganjam ..	.. 66.1	33.9
Agency ..	.. 80.7	19.3
Plains ..	.. 64.5	35.5

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[1] The total rural population of the State numbering 1,40,51,876 (total population being 1,46,45,946) reside in 48,398 inhabited villages. The average number of persons per village thus works out to 290. In the 1941 Census this average was 294, in 1931 it was 266 and in 1921 it was 250. The increase in average number in 1951 is attributed by M. Ahmad to the increased number of villages as obtained by more reliablee investigation in 1951. In the 1951 Census, the highest average number of population per village came from Ganjam Plains (442 per village) followed by Cuttack and Sambalpur, with 383 and 365 respectively. The smallest number of average population per village was returned by Phulbani with 105 and Ganjam Agency with 110.

[2] Ibid, p. 118.

The Rural Character Of Orissa

The rural character of Orissa is brought forward more sharply by noting the percentage of rural population to the total population. Only 2 out of 13 districts of the State have a percentage of rural population below 95. These two are Cuttack and Ganjam. The percentage in Mayurbhanj district is as high as 99.1 and in Ganjam Agency it is 100. The following table[1] compares the rural population of each district to the total population :

TABLE 41

District	Total Population	Rural Population	Rural Population as %age of total population.
Cuttack ..	25,29,244	23,92,614	94.6
Balasore ..	11,06,012	10,64,366	96.2
Puri	15,72,262	14,96,718	95.2
Sambalpur ..	13,01,804	12,49,966	96.0
Ganjam ..	16,24,829	15,10,516	93.0
Agency ..	1,59,296	1,59,256	100.0
Plains ..	14,65,533	13,51,220	92.2
Koraput ..	12,69,534	12,14,876	95.7
Dhenkenal ..	8,39,241	8,11,785	96.7
Keonjhar ..	5,88,441	5,79,098	98.4
Phulbani ..	4,56,895	4,51,397	98.8
Bolangir ..	9,17,875	8,77,192	95.6
Sundargarh ..	5,52,203	5,36,836	97.2
Kalahandi ..	8,58,781	8,46,974	98.6
Mayurbhanj ..	10,28,825	10,19,548	99.1

Growth In Number Of Villages

The total number of villages in 1941 was 45,387, but within 10 years, by 1951, this number had increased by 3,011, to reach the total of 48,398. The number of villages in different districts as recorded in the Censuses of 1941 and 1951 would be found in Table 42 [2] (p. 348).

As M. Ahmad remarks, the principal feature of growth in the number of villages during the decade 1941-1951 lies in the fact that the small-sized villages have grown both in number and population while the large-sized villages have decreased bothways. This would be clear from Table 43 [3] (p. 348).

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[1] Ibid, p. 149.
[2] Ibid, p. 150.
[3] Ibid, p. 151.

TABLE 42

Name of District	Number of villages in 1941	1951	Increase or decrease
Cuttack	5,842	6,248	+406
Balasore	3,716	3,833	+117
Puri	4,405	5,068	+663
Sambalpur	3,358	3,426	+68
Ganjam	3,928	4,513	+585
Agency	1,313	1,453	+140
Plains	2,615	3,060	+445
Koraput	5,181	5,746	+565
Dhenkenal	2,457	2,526	+69
Keonjhar	1,993	1,982	−11
Phulbani	3,850	4,307	+457
Bolangir	2,457	2,524	+67
Sundaragarh	1,638	1,631	−7
Kalahandi	2,885	2,939	+54
Mayurbhanj	3,677	3,655	−22

TABLE 43

	Number and population of villages with population.									
	Less than 500		500 to 1,000		1,000 to 2,000		2,000 to 5,000		5,000 to 10,000	
Year	No.	Population	No.	Population	No.	Population	No.	Population	No.	Population
1951	40,654	72,66,033	5,852	40,30,961	1,652	21,41,301	237	5,96,650	3	16,931
1941	37,967	67,46,790	5,562	37,79,065	1,606	21,43,886	244	6,41,140	8	44,528

It follows, therefore, that there was a large increase in villages with less than 500 population, and a moderate increase in villages with a population between 500 and 1,000.

The Livelihood Pattern

We will now briefly study the livelihood pattern of agricultural classes in Orissa. The population of each class would be found in the following able :[1]

TABLE 44

Livelihood Classes	Population	Percentage
AGRICULTURAL		
Category I — Cultivating owners and dependents.	87,18,822	59.5
Category II — Cultivators of unowned land and dependents.	8,69,751	5.9
Category III — Cultivating labourers and dependents.	18,03,968	12.3
Category IV — Non-cultivating owners and rent-receivers and dependents.	2,19,827	1.5
NON-AGRICULTURAL (Total)	30,33,578	20.8
Total Orissa	1,46,45,946	100.0

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[1] Constructed from a table on p. 116 of Orissa Census Report.

Among the agricultural classes, the owner-cultivators claim the highest percentage, namely 59.5, followed by the agricultural labourers at 12.3 per cent. Cultivators of unowned land are 5.9 per cent of the population and the non-cultivating rent-receivers are a bare 1.5 per cent. The livelihood pattern for agricultural classes expressed per 10,000 of general population for the different districts of Orissa would be found in the following table :[1]

TABLE 45

State & District	Per 10,000 of general population belonging to livelihood class			
	I	II	III	IV
ORISSA ..	5,953	594	1,231	150
Orissa Inland Division	6,467	412	1,317	75
Orissa Coastal Division	5,339	811	1,130	240
Cuttack	5,442	663	1,063	319
Balasore	6,711	805	843	165
Puri	5,260	1,094	1,342	170
Sambalpur	5,986	432	1,426	77
Ganjam	4,494	725	1,161	230
Agency ..	7,088	321	492	166
Plains ..	4,212	769	1,233	237
Koraput	5,942	685	1,038	66
Dhenkenal ..	6,762	230	1,165	210
Keonjhar	7,675	233	1,000	81
Phulbani	6,367	330	1,166	33
Bolangir	6,130	326	1,786	28
Sundargarh ..	7,519	273	865	25
Kalahandi	5,921	559	1,925	37
Mayurbhanj ..	6,929	380	1,343	71

It is apparent that Class I, that is cultivators of land owned and their dependents, constitute the highest percentage of agricultural population, from 76.1 per cent in Keonjhar to 42.1 in Ganjam Plains. Next to them are the agricultural labourers and their dependents. They are 13.2 per cent in the inland division and 11.3 per cent in the coastal division. In district Kalahandi they are as much as a fifth (19.3 per cent) of the total population. The lowest percentage (8.4 per cent) is found in district Balasore.

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[1] Constructed from table on p. 139 of Orissa Census Report.

The Agricultural Labourers

We find that in Orissa also there is a wide disparity about the number of agricultural labourers as revealed by the Census Report and the Agricultural Labour Enquiry of the Government of India. This Enquiry, it may be noted, was done in three stages :

(I) The General Village Survey;
(II) The General Family Survey;
(III) The Intensive Family Survey.

For the General Village Survey, the State was divided in three zones on geographical and agronomical considerations, and 25, 10 and 10 villages were selected from each of the zones respectively. The occupation and status of 3,194 families living in the villages surveyed is shown in the following table :[1]

TABLE 46

Occupation & Status		Total Number of families		Percentage of families to total No. of families.
Agricultural owners		1,322		41.4
Agricultural tenants		123		3.9
Agricultural Workers:				
(a) without land	605)	1,212	18.9)	37.9
(b) with land	607)		19.0)	
TOTAL AGRICULTURAL FAMILIES		2,657		83.2
TOTAL NON-AGRICULTURAL FAMILIES		537		16.8
ALL FAMILIES		3,194		100.0

The General Family Survey[2] gives an even higher estimate of agricultural workers, namely 42.94 per cent. In the 45 sample villages selected for the Survey, the number of families living was 3,183. As in the previous Survey, the State was divided in three zones, the total population of the selected villages being 15,679. Agriculture was the main occupation of most of the families, 2,670 out of 3,183 families or 83.88 per cent being agricultural. Non-agricultural families were 503 or 15.8 per cent of the total. Ten families had no specific stable occupation. Of the agricultural families, 37.69 per cent were owners, 4.15 per cent tenants, and 42.94 per cent agricultural workers (23.75 per cent being with land and 19.20 per cent landless). The occupational distribution of families in all sample villages would be found in the following table[3] :

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[1] Agricultural Wages in India, Op. cit., p. 132.

[2] Published as Rural Man-power and Occupational Structure, Ministry of Labour Government of India, Delhi, 19 4.

[3] Ibid, p. 130.

TABLE 47

Agricultural Landownership	Agricultural Tenancy	Agricultural Labour			Total Agricultural families	Total Non-agricultural families	All Families
		With land	Without land	Total			
(a) 1,171	132	755	612	1,367	2,670	503	3,183
(b) 6,627	653	3,773	2,420	6,193	13,473	2,185	15,679
(c) 5.66	4.95	5.00	3.95	4.53	5.05	4.34	4.93

(a) Total Number of Families.

(b) Total Number of persons in the family.

(c) Average size of family.

The General Village Survey found involuntary labour or *begar* prevalent in some form or other in the surveyed villages. *Begar* was required from workers who had obtained plots of land (*heta*) or loans from the zamindars. Such workers were sometimes required to perform both agricultural and non-agricultural work either without payment or on nominal payment.[1]

Preponderance Of Uneconomic Holdings

Let us now see the position of agricultural holdings in Orissa. As M. Ahmed has remarked, "There is remarkable paucity of information relating to agricultural holdings in Orissa." Whatever information, however, is available bears testimony to the preponderance of small uneconomic holdings. The earliest estimate available was made by the Orissa Land Revenue and Land Tenure Committee. See the following table[2]:

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[1] **Agricultural Wages in India**, Op. cit., p. 143. The following description of the Oriya agricultural labourer has been given by an Englishman: "The casual day labourer is known as *mulia*. A system, however, still prevails by which labourers are retained on undefined contracts from year to year. These are designated as *halias* or *kothias*. The *halia* is engaged yearly on *Dol Purnima* day. The basis of his contract is a loan or advance of pay from his employer, varying in amount from Rs. 5 to Rs. 50, and the *halia*, although engaged for the year, cannot free himself from his obligation to work for his employer until he has repaid his advance. He gets a cash wage of Rs. 5 to Rs. 10 for the year, and a daily wage of Rs. -|2|- to Re. -|3|- cash or 2¼ to 3 seers of paddy on the days on which he works. He generally gets an area of about 20 to 25 decimals of land as his *heta* which he is allowed to cultivate with ploughs and seeds provided by his master. He also gets 4 to 8 sheaves of paddy per acre ploughed and one in 8 to 12 sheaves of paddy reaped. He is given one dhoti and one *gamcha* during the year. His total income from all these sources will amount to about Rs. 60 per annum." (Quoted from **Final Report on the Revision Settlement of Orissa (1922-32 A.D.)** by W. W. Dalziel, I.C.S., Settlement Officer, Orissa; Patna, 1934; pp. 6-7).

[2] **Results of a Sample Survey, Report of the Land Revenue and Land Tenure Committee, Orissa,** Cuttack, 1949, Statement I, Appendix IX, p. ii.

TABLE 48

Size of Holding			Total area (Acres)	P.C. of total area to the grand total of Col. 2	Total No. of families	P.C. of total No. of families to the grand total of Col. 4
1			2	3	4	5
Not exceeding 1 acre			1,976·89	3.3	3,402	26.7
Exceeding 1 acre but not		2	3,814·77	6.3	2.451	19.2
,, 2	,,	3	4,420·58	7.3	1,635	12.9
,, 3	,,	4	4,308·58	7.2	1,219	9.6
,, 4	,,	5	3,630·51	6.0	795	6.2
,, 5	,,	6	3,240·08	5.4	582	4.6
,, 6	,,	7	2,766·01	4.6	423	8.4
,, 7	,,	8	2,770·21	4.6	367	3.0
,, 8	,,	9	2,134·45	3.5	249	2.0
,, 7	,,	8	2,346·71	3.9	244	1.9
,, 9	,,	10	7,453·61	12.4	601	4.8
,, 10	,,	15	5,031·40	8.4	290	2.3
,, 15	,,	20	3,137·31	5.2	142	1.2
,, 20	,,	25	2,419·98	4.0	88	0.7
,, 25	,,	30	2,992·13	5.0	88	0.7
,, 30	,,	40	1.757·15	2.9	89	0.4
,, 40	,,	50	1,417·54	2.4	24	0.2
,, 50	,,	75	1,038·89	1.7	12	0.09
,, 75	,,	100	970·13	1.6	8	0.06
,, 100	,,	150	2,603·25	4.3	7	0.05
Over 150 acres						
Grand Total			60,230·38	100.00	12,766	100.00

It is thus seen that as many as 74.6 per cent of the cultivating families of Orissa had holdings of 5 acres or less, while 45.9 per cent had 2 acres or less. This sample survey was fairly extensive and. according to Statement 3 of Appendix IX of the *Report,* covered villages in Cuttack, Puri, Jaipur, North Balasore, Sambalpur, Padampur, Chatrapur, Ganjam, Angul and Koraput. It can, therefore, be regarded as fairly representative.

According to the *Orissa Census Report,* however, the survey of the Land Revenue and Land Tenure Committee cannot be applied to the whole of Orissa, because (i) the selection of 12,766 families surveyed was not based on random sample principle, and (ii) they were not obtained for the entire area now covered by Orissa. Statistics of land holdings in Orissa were collected through the Census questionnaire. The total number of holdings was found to be

31,59,157. The results of this enquiry have been reduced to distribution of 1,000 agricultural holdings by size in the following table[1]:

TABLE 49

District	Area of Holding					No. of holdings about which information not stated
	1-5 acres	6-10 acres	11-33 acres	34-79 acres	80 acres and above	
Cuttack	803	65	36	8	7	81
Balasore	783	123	68	12	3	11
Puri	788	101	47	9	1	54
Sambalpur	619	170	155	28	7	21
Ganjam	793	103	65	7	2	30
Koraput	691	120	69	10	3	107
Dhenkenal	728	172	85	8	1	6
Keonjhar	759	133	90	5	1	12
Phulbani	668	209	88	15	5	15
Bolangir	432	277	240	40	9	52
Sundargarh	563	200	172	26	5	34
Kalahandi	453	189	201	44	7	106
Mayurbhanj	682	207	94	9	1	7

Working out the figures of distribution of households by size of holdings with the distribution of cultivated area by size of holdings, 70 per cent of the households having holdings of 1 to 5 acres occupy only about 30 per cent of the total cultivated area. 14 per cent of households having 6-10 acres each are similarly holding about 22 per cent of the cultivated area. In other words, nearly half the cultivated area constituted of small-sized holdings of 1-10 acres is held by 84 per cent of the households, and the remaining 16 per cent of the households occupying less than half the area under cultivation comprised holdings of above 10 acres. And among these, 2 per cent of the households having more than 33 acres occupy about 13 per cent of the land area. In the group of small holdings, between 1 and 5 acres, 220 households had 1 acre and less, 161 between 1 and 2 acres and 134 between 2 and 3 acres.[2]

M. Ahmed has remarked: "Unfortunately in almost all the districts of Orissa, the group of very small-sized holdings, viz, less than 5 acres, predominates the structure of holdings." These findings are further confirmed by the General Family Survey of Orissa conducted by the Ministry of Labour. In the villages surveyed, the following was found to be the distribution of holdings according to size :—[1]

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[1] Orissa Census Report, M. Ahmad, Op. cit., p. 232.

[2] Ibid. p. 231 and 230.

TABLE 50

Size Group	Percentage to total	Average size per holding (acres)
Under 5 acres	71.47	1.94
Under 10 acres	87.66	2.83
Under 25 acres	96.88	3.96
Under 100 acres	99.80	5.19

Thus, according to this Survey, 71.47 per cent of the holdings were below 5 acres. The average size of holdings was 5.56 acres only. "The holdings of agricultural workers were very small, their average size being 2.43 acres." The average size of holdings belonging to agricultural owners was 8.36 and that of tenants 3.82 acres.

Coincidence Of Caste And Property Distinctions

How these property distinctions tend to coincide with caste distinction is very sharply brought out by the Survey. We are told: "Of the 168 Brahmin families, 121 were landowners, 2 tenants, 3 agricultural workers, and 25 non-agriculturists. Of the 314 Kshatriya families, 145 were landowners, 38 tenants, 105 agriculturists. *The majority of scheduled caste families were agricultural workers.* Of the 1,560 families belonging to this class, 53.40 per cent were agricultural workers, 30.06 per cent landowners, 2.50 per cent tenants and 14.04 per cent non-agriculturists, mostly workers. Nearly one-third of the families from the backward classes were agricultural workers, one-half were owners and tenants, and the remaining non-agriculturists. About half the families of aboriginal communities were owners or tenants, and 43 per cent agricultural workers."[2] M. Ahmed also tells us : "A large number of landowners in Puri district are Brahmins who on account of caste prejudice do not cultivate their own lands and generally lease them out to non-Brahmins. There are a large number of temples including the great Temple of Lord Jagannath and also a large number of *Mathas* in the district owning vast extent of landed properties. In all such cases the lands are leased out on *bhag* (i.e. cropshare)."[3] M. Ahmed has referred again and again to the poverty of the Orissa peasantry, "the repeated visitations of epidemics and prevalence of endemic diseases which are sapping the vitality of the people." And he observes: "Whenever the distress tends to prolong or be widespread, the people with low resistance powers succumb to it in large numbers. In many of the districts the population has either actually diminished or shown negligible increase due to high death rate, even though birth rate has remained high."[1]

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[1] Rural Man-power and Occupational Structure, Op. cit., p. 135.
[2] Ibid, p. 129.
[3] Orissa Census Report, Op. cit., p. 119.

Position Of Panchayats Today: Election And Function

Panchayats were established in Orissa under the Orissa Gram Panchayats Act of 1948. Out of 48,398 villages in Orissa, 28,427 villages had already been covered by Gram Panchayats by the end of 1954-55. For establishment of Gram Panchayat a compact area is selected consisting of one or more villages and with a total population ranging from 5,000 to 10,000. In the beginning the population per unit was maintained at about 2,000 but with experience it was realised that a real economic unit would require a larger population.

All Panchayats are elected on the basis of adult suffrage. There is no provision for nomination of members. The District Magistrate decides in what manner a local area shall be divided on population basis into electoral wards and the number of members to be returned for each such ward. The election rules enjoin that where there are scheduled castes or backward tribes residing within the local area, the division of ward should be so made as to ensure their adequate representation. Election for different wards is held either in succession or simultaneously. At a general meeting of the voters the presidnig officer explains the nature and object of the meeting and reads out the list of candidates stating the number of vacancies in the ward. He then proceeds to take a poll secretly for each candidate recording the number of votes given for each candidate in his own hand.

Gram Panchayats have been given certain obligatory functions in the local administration and certain discretionary functions too. The more important obligatory functions are medical relief, sanitation and conservancy, primary education, establishment, management and care of common grazing grounds and places for disposal of the dead, water supply, roads, and control and construction of new buildings. The discretionary functions relate to afforestation and maintenance of village forests, veterinary and medical facilities, famine relief, organising Gram Sevaks, maintaining libraries, controlling and managing cattle pounds and farms. Panchayats have powers to order people to take preventive measures and to clear a nuisance. A Panchayat has control on all public streets and waterways which are not private properties and not under the control of the State Government of District Board or any other authority. It has powers to do all things necessary for the maintenance and repairs of such public streets and waterways, to construct new bridges and culverts; divert, discontinue or close any public street, culvert or bridge; open, enlarge or otherwise improve any public street; undertake small irrigation projects, set spart any public water source for drinking or culinary purposes and prohibit washing of cloths, animals, etc., likely to pollute the course of such water. Similarly for improvement of sanitation, it may require any owner or occupier of any land or building to close, remove, repair, disinfect and clean any latrine, urinal, drain, etc. It can direct cleaning of any vegetation, undergrowth, scrubby jungle, etc., and removal of dung, night-soil and any obnoxious or offensive matters.

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[1] Ibid, p. 122.

The more enthusiastic Panchayats have already demonstrated that Panchayats can be instrumental in improving the conditions of the villages in matters of education, public health, communications and other welfare activities of the people. Grain *Golas* have been established at several Panchayats centres and Gram Panchayats have taken up their management. These *Golas,* while to a considerable extent providing rural credit to the agriculturists and to that extent reducing rural indebtedness, are also being made the nucleus for the supply of improved seeds to the agriculturists at a rate of interest of 25 per cent repayable in the shape of seeds which will augment the resources of the Panchayat and, what is more important, step up production of food grains. Similarly, fisheries have proved an important source of revenue to the Panchayats and Government tanks are being developed systematically with a view to providing the nucleus of income for the Panchayats. Yet another activity worth mentioning is the leasing out of Panchayat lands on *bhag* (cropshare) basis which while ensuring a fair deal to the *bhag chasi* (cropsharer) helps a Panchayat to improve its finances.

Judicial Work

Nyaya Panchayats or what are called Adalati Panchayats in this State have also been established. These Panchayats comprise of several Gram Sabhas. The Panches of the Adalati Panchayats are elected and they form a panel out of which three Panches form the bench of the Adalati Panchayat. In each Panchayat there shall be one Panch who lives in the local area of the Gram Sabha in which any one of the parties to the suit before the Adalati Panchayat resides and one Panch who lives in the area in which none of the parties resides. The Adalati Panchayats have no relation with the Gram Panchayats, except that the Gram Sabha elects three adult members to act as Panches in the Adalati Panchayat. In other words, a Gram Sabha is the parent body which elects members for the Gram Panchayat as well as for the Adalati Panchayat. There is no provision for nomination.

There are indications that establishment of Adalati Panchayats has reduced litigation. It is hoped that with fuller organisation and experience litigation will perceptibly be on the decrease.

It is not proposed to introduce Adalati Panchayats on an intensive scale until Gram Panchayats have sufficiently taken root. Where such Panchayats have already been established, their performance is being closely watched and as the institutions get popular and convince the common man that this is the pattern suitable for our country, these will be established in other areas. In regard to membership of Adalati Panchayats it is felt that there should be some such prohibition as not to allow any person below the age of 40 years to become a Panch. According to the present structure there is no appeal in respect of criminal cases from the decision of an Adalati Panchayat, but the Sub-divisional Magistrate has powers of revision which is final. An official view is that it may be necessary to qualify this provision further by prescribing that a Sub-Divisional Magistrate to whom revision shall lie must be one with appellate powers; otherwise the revision shall be before a Magistrate having appellate powers and jurisdiction over the area.

Panchayat Finances

Certain sources of income have been diverted in favour of Gram Panchayats. Chief amongst them are, tax upon the owner and occupier of immovable properties according to the circumstances and collection of license fee on brokers, commission agents, weigh-men and measurers in the local area of the Panchayat. In the markets fees can be realised for exposing goods for sale. Fee for use of slaughter houses maintained by Gram Panchayats are also leviable, besides fees on registration of cattle sold in local area. A Panchayat can levy profession tax on every company, firm or association or person exercising a profession, trade or calling. These have been provided for under the Panchayat Act.

A grant-in-aid of Rs. 150 per Panchayat is initially sanctioned by Government. Besides Motor Vehicles Taxation grant is distributed amongst selected Gram Panchayats every year and a grant for maintenance of sanitation staff is allowed by Government. A part of the income derived by Government from lease of Kendu Leaf is also made available to Gram Panchayats in shape of grants.

Every year the Panchayat passes the budget estimate presented by the Sarpanch. The District Magistrate has the authority to modify a budget to ensure that adequate provisions have been made for the performance of necessary services. No expenditure can be incurred without proper budget provision and the accounts of the Panchayat are subject to audit. The revenues of the Panchayat are spent in discharge of the functions enumerated above.

The Panchayat Staff

The President or Sarpanch of the Gram Panchayat is elected by the members of the Panchayat and not by the whole electorate. A Panchayat has no executive officer attached to it. It has only a secretary who is subject to the full disciplinary control of the Gram Panchayat.

The conditions of service of the staff of the Gram Panchayats are the same as those of the Government servants of similar status in respect of leave, salary and travelling allowance, etc. No employee of a Gram Panchayat shall be retained in service after the age of 55 years without the prior approval of the District Magistrate. A service book and a character roll is maintained for every permanent employee in the prescribed form and the secretary is responsible for their correct maintenance. Security is taken from such staff of the Gram Panchayat as deal with valuables and cash.

The actual size of the staff of a Panchayat will depend upon the volume of work to be handled by it. For the present each Panchayat has a secretary to start with.

Control And Co-ordination

The District Magistrate has over-all control over the activities of Gram Panchayats. He exercises general powers of inspection, supervision and control over the administrative duties of the Gram Panchayats. An Officer of the P.W.D., Forest Department, Education Department, Agriculture Department, Medical Department, Health Department, Industries Department and Veterinary Department can be directed to attend any meeting of the Gram Panchayat and advise on matters affecting the work of the Department. A District Magistrate can order dissolution and reconstitution or abolition of a Gram Panchayat in case of neglect of duty or abuse of powers. The village officer system in Orissa does not exist in all districts and so no attempt has been made to define the relationship between a Panchayat and a village officer.

There is no separate Panchayat Department of the State Government but the Revenue Department is in charge of the subject of Gram Panchayat. Organisers have been appointed from the Administrative Service to supervise the working of the Panchayats and to assist the District Magistrate in day to day administration of the Gram Panchayats Act. There is no provision for supervising a Panchayat. Government exercises control through the District Magistrates.

The scheme of Panchayat organisation was taken up in 1948, when a passionate advocate of Village Panchayats, Dr. Kailash Nath Katju, was the Governor of the Province. In 1950 a Panchayat worker's training camp was conducted at Cuttack and Dr. Katju, who had then gone to West Bengal as its Governor, was invited to address it. In his address, Dr. Katju placed before the trainees the right perspective on the question. "It is my firm belief that the Gram Panchayats can serve the best interests of the country," said Dr. Katju. He said that the improvement of the rural population was a matter which depended on its own organisations and on its own body politic. The whole conception of the Panchayats was based on the village community and a spirit of fraternity. "It is in the spirit of this kind of fraternity that the Gram Sabhas should elect their Gram Panchayat." Referring to the State Gram Panchayat Act, Dr. Katju said that the Gram Sabhas should have in view the all-round improvement of the village. He said that the rich and poor should feel alike that they had a hand in the Government, and improvement and well-being of the village depended on them. He added: "The village community must learn to help itself. There is no need to look up to Government or to any outsider. It was Mahatmaji's ideal and the Congress always held that it is in the village that the roots of country's progress lie."[1]

The Problem Of Intermediate Units: The Anchal Shasan Idea

Besides the organisation of Gram Panchayats, the State has been discussing since a long time, from 1948 in fact, this decentralisation of administration combined with Central administration and planning through Gram Panchayats at the lower level and Anchal Shasans at the intermediate level, between the State and Panchayats.

The Anchal Shasan Scheme has been formulated on the basis of the recommendations of the Orissa Land Revenue and Land Tenure Committee in 1949. In recommending this scheme, the Orissa Committee made some meaningful and far-reaching observations which deserve our attention. The role of the Anchal Shasan *vis-a-vis* the Gram Panchayat has been indicated by the Committee as follows: "The Rowlands Committee wanted the Union Boards to play an important role in the new administrative set-up as the smallest unit of Government; we think that instead of the Union Boards the unit should be the Gram Panchayats and that seems to be the policy already accepted by most Provincial Governments including our own as evidenced by recent legislations. But at least in this Province there seems to be a considerable amount of misgiving in the minds of both Government officers and the people about the actual working of these Panchayats; while, on the one hand, there is fear in Government circles that as things are at the present moment, these Panchayats will be utilised by undesirable elements in the villages to serve their own selfish or partisan ends and it will be difficult for the Sub-Divisional Officer and more so for the Registrar of Co-operative Societies to effectively supervise and control them, if such Panchayats are constituted everywhere; on the other hand, people fear that both the Sub-Divisional Officer and the Registrar, Co-operative Societies, do not and cannot have adequate knowledge and understanding of local affairs and so are likely to interfere in the work of the Panchayats in a wrong way under the influence of interested parties. These misgivings on either side appear to be true and we are afraid that these Panchayats will prove a total failure and make the gulf of distrust between the public and the public servants still wider, unless they are made to form an integral part of a radically different kind of administrative set-up as has been recommended by us. Under our scheme, the Anchal Executive Officer will take the place of the Sub-Divisional Officer and the Registrar of Co-operative Societies for supervision and control of Panchayats. Unlike either of them, he will be responsible for the proper execution of the development plans covering every field of nation-building activities and he cannot possibly discharge this heavy responsibility without the willing support and participation of the people and their Gram Panchayats. He will thus have sufficient local interest and knowledge to be able to guide and help the Village Panchayats as well as to control them in the right way."

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[1] **Indian Express (Madras Edition), dated May 22, 1950.**

In March 1953, Orissa's Chief Minister, Shri Nabakrushna Chaudhury, told the State Assembly of the Government decision "to create people's leadership in the Anchal Shasan." Declaring the administration's "faith in the common man, the people, the sovereign power in the land", he said that it was intended to bring about this decentralisation by which the Anchals or regions would have not only the scope for execution of development plans but also would have the responsibility of local administration. "Such a decentralisation would not only bring the responsibility on the shoulders of the people who would elect regional Committees but would also have the scope to improve their regions."[1]

The Anchal Shasan Scheme

In the new pattern of decentralised administration, with the establishment of the Anchal Shasan, the District Boards will be abolished. The entire State will be delimited into 117 Anchals—each Anchal having an Anchal Sabha. Big municipalities will be outside the purview of the Anchal Shasan administration as their problems are essentially different from those of the rural and semi-urban areas. Each Gram Panchayat or Notified Area Council or small municipality in an Anchal will be called upon to elect one member to the Anchal Sabha. These members will elect from amongst them a Chairman and Vice-Chairman who may be emunerated, if necessary. There shall be Standing Committees for education, public health, agriculture and development and there hall also be an Executive Committee to deal with finance, budget nd such other important subjects as may be assigned by the Sabha.

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[1] **Amrit Bazar Patrika (Calcutta Edition), 19.3.1955.**

Decisions of the Anchal Sabha and the Standing Committees will be executed by the Anchal Executive Officer who will be a member of the Administration Service, under the employment of the State Government. He will be assisted by an Engineer, a Health Officer, an Agricultural Officer and an Education Officer. The Officers of different Departments now at the district level may be nominated by the State Government as technical advisers to the Anchal Shasans in their jurisdiction. The Committees in each Anchal shall consist of the departmental officers concerned, the Anchal Executive Officer, the Chairman or the Vice-Chairman of the Anchal Sabha and a few members as well as outsiders.

The responsibility of the Anchal Shasans will be to look after education in the Anchals below the High School stage, medical, veterinary and public health institutions in the Anchals, agriculture, village forest and irrigation and construction of roads and communications. It is also contemplated to give Anchal Shasans certain control over the Gram Panchayats in their area. Land Revenue will be collected by the Anchal Shasans but where Panchayats will be willing to undertake the collection work, they will be paid 15 per cent of the collections towards their labour, thereby increasing substantially the resources of the Panchayats. It is also contemplated to give Anchal Shasans and Gram Panchayats effective control over communal lands, encroachments, leasing out of waste lands, etc., in their respective areas.

The entire land revenue and cess of the State is proposed to be diverted in favour of Anchal Shasans and it will be their responsibi-ity to collect the same.

The Orissa Anchal Shasan Bill, incorporating these ideas, was passed unanimously by the State Legislative Assembly on December 2, 1955. Replying to the debate, Shri Nabakrushna Chaudhury aid that a Committee would be set up in the near future for fixing up boundaries of the Anchals, which was the most difficult part of he job to be performed by the Government.

The Panchayat idea is familiar and popular among the Oriya peasantry. Many Panchayats in the State have proved their worth nd have proved instrumental in bringing about an all-round mprovement in the conditions of villages in matters of education, ommunication, sanitation and health and other matters. The uture of Panchayats in the State is bright.

TABULAR REPRESENTATION III

No. of Villages and Panchayats, etc.	Legislation Passed	Amendment	Village Panchayats	
			How Constituted	Powers in village Management
Total No. of Villages 48,398. No. of Panchayats (N.A.) Villages covered by Panchayats 28,427.	The Bihar and Orissa Local Self-Govt. Act 1885. Orissa Gram Panchayats Act 1948.		Gram Panchayats established in compact selected areas with a population ranging from 5,000 to 10,000. At first it was 2,000 but it was realised that a real economic unit would require a bigger population. All Panchayats are formed on the basis of adult suffrage. Members are elected. District Magistrate decides the area and population for a Panchayat and the No. of members it is to send. Adequate provision for representation of minorities or scheduled castes. Gram Sabha is the parent body which elects members to both Gram Panchayats and Panchayat Adalats. There is no provision for nomination. President is elected by the members and not the whole electorate. District Magistrate has over-all control on Gram Panchayats. The Revenue Department is in charge of Gram Panchayats. There is no provision for supervising a Panchayat. Gram Sabha is a permanent body. Membership is lifetime.	Discretionary functions, include medical relief, sanitation and conservancy, primary education, roads. control and construction of new buildings. Discretionary functions relate to afforestation, maintenance of village forests, veterinary and medical facilities, famine relief, organising Gram Sewaks, maintaining libraries. It has control on all public streets and waterways. It can enlarge, improve and repair these. It can undertake small irrigation works. Panchayats can be instrumental in improving the conditions of the villages in matters of education, public health and other welfare activities. Can acquire land for its own purposes. Can levy a compulsory labour tax on all able-bodied adults.

PANCHAYAT INSTITUTION IN ORISSA

Sources of Revenue of Panchayats	Nyaya Panchayats'		Report of the working of Panchayats		REMARKS
	How Constituted	Powers	Gram	Nyaya	
Grain *Golas* have been established in many Panchayats. They provide rural credit. They supply improved seeds to the agriculturists at 25% nterest payable in kind. This augments the resources of the Panchayat. Fisheries are another source of revenue. Panchayat lands can be leased out on *bhag* (crop-share) basis. Gram Panchayats can levy tax on owner and occupier of immovable property, collect licence fee on brokers, commission agents, weigh men and measurers in the local area of the Panchayat. Fees can be levied on the slaughter houses tax on profession, trade or calling. A Grant-in-aid of Rs. 150 is initially sanctioned by Govt. A grant fee for maintenance of sanitation staff is provided every year. All fees, fines and penalties realised under the Act shall be credited to the Gram Sabha Fund.	Known as Adalati Panchayats. One Adalat for several Gram Sabhas. Panches are elected and they form a panel out of which three panches form the bench. Adalati Panchayats have no relation with the Gram Panchayats. Only the Gram Sabhas elect three adult members to the Adalat. Adalats are not to be introduced intensively.	Can try certain civil and criminal cases In criminal cases coming under its jurisdiction there can be no appeal, but the Sub-Divisional Officer has powers of revision which are final. Powers of some Adalats are enhanced to try Sec. 411, 379, 526 of the Indian Penal Code. In case two parties agree, Adalats may act as arbitrators. In case of division of opinion the decision of the majority prevails. Decision of the Adalat in civil suits is final. No legal practitioner is allowed.		Panchayat Adalats have reduced litigation. This is expected to achieve greater results with wider experience and better organisation.	It is felt that the membership of the Panchayati Adalat should be restricted to people over 40 years in age. In determining the National Extension Blocks, Gram Panchayats have been taken as the units, 10 Panchayats in a compact area forming one Extension Block. The future pattern of decentralised Local Self-Government is the Anchal Shasan with the establishment of which District Boards will be abolished. The Anchal Shasans will have statutory control in respect of certain matters, such as, management of markets, rest houses, *sarais* and other public institutions. The Gram Panchayat shall derive one-third of the local cess levied in the area from the Anchal Shasan. The Anchal Shasan Bill has been passed into law.

CHAPTER XIV

PUNJAB

PUNJAB can well be called the cradle land of the Indian Panchayat institution. The incoming Aryans first settled in this very area and established the Village Panchayats. It is in Punjab again that the village communities lasted the longest. Manuscripts describing conditions under Panchayat Raj in a 200 sq. mile area around Delhi, from the 4th Century to the middle of the 19th Century, were recently found in village Sorom in Muzaffarnagar district.[1] The Panchayats, according to the records, were responsible for local administration and enjoyed a wide degree of autonomy. Their powers were confirmed by successive emperors regardless of dynasty. The Panchayats in return undertook to pay taxes and raise militia in times of war. Indeed, in the studies of village communities by early British officers, Punjab villages feature again and again. Douie has the following to say about the village communities of Punjab :

> "The affairs of the brotherhood were formerly managed by an informal village council or Panchayat. But this body was too numerous and loosely constructed to fittingly represent the community in its dealing with Government officials. A few of its leading members were, therefore, selected as headmen or *lambardars*, and the appointment of headmen naturally came to be confined to particular families. From a revenue point of view, the most important function of the headman is to collect the revenue from the co-parceners and pay it into the treasury. The special position assigned to the *lambardars* and the action of our courts stripped the Panchayat of its influence, and practically it has ceased to exist. The administration of the *malba*, or fund out of which the common expenses of the brotherhood are met, is usually left in the hands of headmen, but it is generally recognised that each member of the proprietary body has a right to demand an account of its expenditure."[2]

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[1] This valuable discovery has been made by Shri Jagdeo Singh Shastri, a Delhi research scholar. He says that the manuscripts were written in Hindi, Urdu. Arabic and Persian and were preserved by Chaudhry Kabul Singh of Village Sorom. One of the manuscripts mentioned the sending of local instructors to train the armies of Shivaji in guerilla warfare. It is stated in another place that Aurangzeb exempted Panchayats around Delhi from payment of *Jazia* (tax on non-Muslims). Mr. Shastri says that a study of the manuscripts reveals that in the earlier days there was no rigid caste system and inter-caste marriages were prevalent. Even sweepers and washermen used to act as Panchayat Chiefs. See **Our Punjab** (Monthly published by Director, Public Relations, Punjab) Vol. 6, No. 6, June 1953.

[2] Sir James M. Douie ; **Punjab Settlement Manual,** Op. cit., p. 63.

The Punjab Village

The State of Punjab of the Indian Union as constituted today is only a small part of the old and historic Punjab Province which in 1941 had a population of 2,84,18,918, living in 35,256 villages and 202 towns in 29 districts. After Partition, the present Punjab State has 13 districts and 54 tehsils. Its area is 37,378 square miles. Its population according to the 1951 Census was 1,26,41,205, living in 130 towns and 15,147 villages. Of this total population, 1,01,40,273 or 81.0 per cent was rural and 24,00,932 or 19.0 per cent urban.

In the Punjab, as in other North Indian States, a village has a central or main *abadi* (i.e. habitation), a continuous and compact collection of houses, conspicuous by a number of *pucca* (i.e. brick) houses wherein reside its inhabitants. There may be scattered houses in the fields used sometimes as residence, but normally made use of during busy agricultural seasons. In addition to the old and main *abadi,* there may be smaller *abadies* used by some families as their exclusive or additional residences. In hilly areas, as the cultivation is scattered, formation of large hamlets does not arise. For purposes of enumeration in the 1951 Census, a village has been defined to mean any area (a) for which a separate record of rights exists, or (b) which has been separately assessed to land revenue or would have been so assessed if the land revenue had not been released, compounded for or redeemed, or (c) which the State Government, by general rule or special orders, declare to be an estate. The average population per village has been estimated at 988.7, the average area 1280.4 acres and the average density of population per square mile 494.2.

The Livelihood Pattern

In the Punjab, out of each 10,000 population in rural areas, 7,737 are engaged in agriculture. Out of these, 4,671 belong to Livelihood Category One, that is, cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned and their dependents. Cultivators of land wholly or mainly unowned and dependents (Category Two) number 1,905. Agricultural labourers and dependents (Category Three) number 922, and non-cultivating owners constitute 239. The non-agricultural classes in the rural areas number 2,263. Thus in the Punjab countryside, 77 per cent of the population belong to agricultural classes and 23 per cent to non-agricultural classes.

Out of 13 districts in the State, Simla and Kangra belong to the Natural Division, called the Himalayan Punjab Division. Simla has no rural area. In Kangra, 95 per cent population is rural out of which 89 per cent is constituted by agricultural classes and 11 per cent only by non-agricultural classes. Out of this 89 per cent of agricultural classes, 75 per cent belong to Livelihood Category One, 10 per cent to Category Two, and bare 2 per cent each to Category Three and Four.

The remaining 11 districts fall in what is called the Punjab Plains Division. The Division as a whole has 77 per cent agricultural classes as against 23 per cent non-agricultural. The former are divided thus in accordance with livelihood classes: Category 1—44 per cent; Category II—20 per cent; Category III—10 per cent; Category IV—3 per cent. In other words, the agricultural tenants or crop-sharers constitute 20 per cent and the agricultural labourers 10 per cent of the rural population.

The General Family Survey conducted by the Agricultural Labour Enquiry of the Ministry of Labour arrived at identical conclusions. There were 5,074 families in the 29 villages selected for the enquiry. The total population of the sample villages was 28,721. The following table[1] gives the distribution of families by occupation :

TABLE 51

Family Occupation	Total No. of families.	Total No. of persons in the families	Average size of a family
Agricultural landownership	2,237	13,249	5.92
Agricultural tenancy	868	5,520	6.36
Agricultural labour :			
(a) with land	83) 513	463) 2,581	5.58) 5.03
(b) without land	430)	2,118)	4.93)
TOTAL AGRICULTURAL FAMILIES	3,618	21,350	5.9
TOTAL NON-AGRICULTURAL FAMILIES	1,428	7,312	5.12
No specific stable occupation	28	59	2.11
All families	5,074	28,721	5.66

Of the total number of families, 3,618 or 71.3 were agricultural. Non-agricultural families comprised 28.1 per cent of the agricultural families, 2,237 or about 62 per cent were those of agricultural landowners, while agricultural workers' families numbered only 573.

Lower Percentage of Agricultural labourers

It thus follows that Punjab has a lower percentage of agricultural labourers than most other States. The reason for the low return may be the prevalence in wide tracts of the State of the system of *Sanjhi,* whereunder the agricultural owners employ persons to cultivate their farms on a crop-share basis. This *Sanjhi* of the Punjab, indeed, has a peculiar position, somewhere between a full-fledged crop-sharer and agricultural wage-earner. The Punjab Census Report,[1] which in other respects also is highly unsatisfactory and uninformative as compared to the Reports of other States we have covered, has hardly anything to say on the subject, and we are not aware as to how the *Sanjhis* have been placed in Census enumeration.

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[1] Rural Man-power and Occupational Structure, Op. cit., p. 142.

Size Of Landholdings

Nor is a clear picture available of the distribution of landholdings in the Punjab according to size. The Census of Landholdings undertaken under instructions of the Land Reforms Division of the National Planning Commission was restricted to holdings of 10 acres and above. According to this Land Census classifying holdings according to area owned (in ordinary acres as distinct from standard acres), the total number of holdings above 10 acres was 3,51,230, which comprised an area of 89,59,742 acres, out of which 26,42,849 acres were leased. Out of this leased area, 6,57,406 acres were on cash rents and 19,85,443 acres on kind rents.

According to figures given in the Punjab State Assembly in March 1948, 65.2 per cent owned less than 5 acres of land, 83.3 per cent less than 10 acres, and 90.5 per cent less than 15 acres. According to an estimate of the Punjab Government supplied in 1952,[2] 20,04,371 owners, that is 80 per cent of the total, had holdings of 10 acres or less. Out of these 14,18,221 had holdings of 5 acres and less. As against this, 11,685 owners, that is about 0.45 per cent of the total had holdings of 100 acres and above.

The General Family Survey of the Union Labour Ministry, however, gives a different picture. Table 52 [3] (pp. 368-369) gives the size distribution of cultivators' holdings according to the categories of families.

The Maldistribution Of Land

It follows that out of 2,686 holdings, 1,712 or about 64 per cent were held by owners, while agricultural tenants occupied 29 per cent of the total. Furthermore, the total area held by the owners was greater than that held by tenants. The average size

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[1] Census of India, 1951, Vol. VIII, Punjab, Pepsu, Himachal Pradesh, Bilaspur, Delhi, Part IA-Report, by Lakshmi Chandra Vashishtha, Simla, 1953.

[2] See author's **Land Reforms in India**, Second Edition, 1955, published by All India Congress Committee: Table on p. 166.

[3] **Rural Man-Power and Occupational Structure,** Op. cit., p. 149.

TABLE

Size of holdings	HOLDER'S FAMILY			
	Agricultural owners		Agricultural tenants	
	No.	Area (acres)	No.	Area (acres)
1	2	3	4	5
Under 1 acre ..	31	17.60	19	11.5
1 acre and under 2.5 acres ..	88	148.88	69	110.75
2.5 acres and under 5 acres ..	190	694.2	102	369.15
5 acres and under 7.5 acres ..	228	1,378.25	114	694.93
7.5 acres and under 10 acres ..	217	1,841.54	109	934.13
10 acres and under 25 acres ..	770	11,769.30	330	4,997.81
25 acres and under 50 acres ..	167	5,325.77	37	1,159.58
50 acres and under 100 acres ..	18	1,059.00	2	105.0
100 acres and above ..	3	368.70	nil	nil
Total	1,712	22,614.21	782	8,382.95
Average size of holding		13.21	..	10.72

of a holding in the case of owners was 13.21 acres, while for tenants, agricultural workers and non-agricultural families it was 10.72, 4.0 and 4.11 acres, respectively. Taking all the families together, the average size of a holding was 11.83 acres. Only 3 holdings were more than 100 acres in area, while 23.5 per cent, accounting for only 4.8 per cent of the total area, were below 5 acres. Agricultural workers' families had 71 holdings of which 50, or 70.4 per cent were below 5 acres.

Of the total of 2,686 holdings, 1,124 or 41.9 per cent were between 10 and below 25 acres, 12.51 per cent between 7.5 and below 10 acres, and 13.55 per cent between 5 and below 7.5 acres. The first category accounted for 53.8 per cent of the total area. 632 holdings, constituting 23.53 per cent of the total number of holdings, were below 5 acres and comprised of 1,510.12 acres, that is a bare 4.75 per cent of the total holdings area.

Caste Composition Of Village Population

The maldistribution of land is apparent, though the situation obviously is not as bad as in other States. The General Family Survey gives the following account of caste composition of the families in the surveyed villages.[1] Of 5,074 families, 1,086 belonged

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[1] Ibid, p. 142.

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OCCUPATION					
Agricultural workers		Non-Agriculturists		Total number of holdings	Area (acres)
No.	Area (acres)	No.	Area (acres)		..
6	7	8	9	10	11
27	11.55	45	13.67	122 (4.54)	54.32 (0.17)
15	21.25	26	42.90	198 (7.37)	323.75 (1.02)
8	29.15	12	38.55	312 (11.62)	1,132.05 (3.56)
6	34.25	16	94.15	364 (13.55)	2,201.58 (6.93)
5	43.25	5	40.90	336 (12.51)	2,859.82 (9.00)
9	114.80	15	200.20	1,124 (41.85)	17,082.11 (53.80)
1	30.00	2	67.00	207 (7.71)	6,582.45 (20.72)
nil	nil	nil	nil	20 (0.74)	1,164.0 (3.66)
nil	nil	nil	nil	3 (0.11)	368.7 (1.16)
71	284.25	121	491.37	2,686 (100.00)	31,768.78 (100.00)
..	4.00	..	4.11	..	11.83

Note :—Figures within brackets denote percentages.

to the Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaishya communities, 968 to scheduled castes and tribes, and 63 to tribal, aboriginal and backward classes; the miscellaneous group consisting of Sikhs, etc., accounted for 2,956 families. Most of the families (82 per cent) engaged in agricultural labour belonged to scheduled castes and tribes; 12 per cent were Sikhs and 5 per cent were Brahmins and Kshatriyas taken together. Amongst owners, 79 per cent were Sikhs, Brahmins and 'others'; Kshatriyas and Vaishyas accounted for 18.5 and 1 per cent respectively. Tenants were drawn mostly from the Sikhs or scheduled castes and tribes. Most of the families cultivating the land were owners, there being only 868 tenant families as against 2,237 owner families. It follows that in the Punjab, as elsewhere, the property differences tend to coincide with caste differences, the so-called "upper" castes being mostly owners, and the so-called "lower" castes mostly constituting the labouring classes. The General Village Survey[1] found that in some cases, workers who were indebted to their employers "were forced to work for inadequate remuneration." The Survey found that in villages of Kangra district, landlords enjoyed the privilege of free service from workers in return for the grant of small plots of land as house sites, though this custom was dying out.

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[1] Agricultural Wages in India, Vol. I, Op. cit., p. 158

The Panchayat Act Of 1912

The earliest legislation on Panchayats in the State was the Punjab Panchayat Act of 1912, which was followed by another Act in 1921-22. These enactments of the British were intended more for propaganda than for solid work, and they utterly failed in establishing Panchayats to any extent or creating response among the villagers. The Panchayats which were formed existed merely on paper because they had no effective powers. Nor could the Panches inspire confidence or respect in the people because only those persons could find a place in the Panchayats who had ingratiated themselves with the authorities. No agency was created to help in the organisation of the Panchayats, and the District Collectors had complete control over them. Their practice was to select certain persons for the Panchayats who were deemed fit according to the opinion of the *Zaildars* and *Safaidposhes*. The judicial powers of the Panchayats was also nominal. They could not entertain civil suits of more than Rs. 50 value, and in a criminal case they could not impose more than Rs. 25 as fine. Judicial fees and fines were the only sources of their income. The income used to be hardly enough to purchase Panchayat stationery, or at the most, for distribution of quinine in the malaria season. Consequently no effective measures resulted for improving sanitation and promotion of any other welfare activity.

The Panchayat Act Of 1939

Another Panchayat Act was put on the statute book in 193 by the Unionist Ministry. It superseded the earlier Acts and conferred, among others, wide judicial powers, both civil and criminal on the Panchayats. As many as 36 sections of the Indian Pena Code ranging from section 202 to 510 were included in the schedul of the Panchayat Act, which prescribed the legal authority of th Panchayats. Efforts were also made to improve the financia resources of Panchayats through Government grants equal to th judicial fees and fines credited by the Panchayats to the Gover ment treasury. Panchayats were also allowed to levy taxes i their respective areas with the previous sanction of the Gover ment. The Government awarded grant-in-aid to a Panchay equal to the amount of tax collected by it. Panchayat funds we also augmented through voluntary contributions. The amoun thus collected were utilised by the Panchayats to provide ne libraries, repair school buildings and otherwise help in the welfare the village. A separate Panchayat Department was created to lo after Panchayats.

The 1939 Act did result in considerable advance in the organiz tion of Panchayats in undivided Punjab where, it is clear, Villa

Panchayats developed more than anywhere else in pre-Independence days. There were 733 Panchayats working at the end of 1930. This number rose to 1,489 at the end of 1939. After Partition of Punjab in August 1947, a total of 4,414 Panchayats came to the share of East Punjab out of which 3,700 were functioning. Government efforts during the first two years after Independence were directed towards reorganising and improving the efficiency of existing Panchayats. By March 1951, the number of notified Panchayats had increased to 6,000 of which nearly 4,600 were functioning. About 900 Panchayats were concentrating on improving village lanes and streets. More than 3,000 Panchayats were helping in manure-pitting and healthy disposal of village refuse. About 800 Panchayats had educational institutions of their own and were equipped with libraries; 122 had medical dispensaries or first-aid centres; 63 had radio sets; about 1,200 Panchayats were assisting in the Grow More Food Campaign by digging wells.[1]

After Partition

The Partition of the Punjab was an unprecedented upheaval and gave a rude shock to all settled life, and the Panchayats suffered equally. The unending flow of refugees from West Pakistan created unprecedented problems before the State Government and top priority had to be given to the resettlement of these unhappy countrymen of ours. In spite of this, even in early post-Partition years, the State Government gave its attention to the question of Village Panchayats. As early as January 1950, a bill to replace the existing Panchayat Act with a view to vitalise the Panchayats of the State was drafted. The main changes contemplated were establishment of a Panchayat in each village instead of in selected villages and also to enlarge their municipal and judicial functions.[2] Shri Prithvi Singh Azad, then Local Self-Government Minister of the State, told the Rohtak District Panchayat Union on February 4, 1950, that "Panchayat Raj, the conception of real Swaraj of Mahatma Gandhi, is for the advancement of village life and not for creating unnecessary disputes, as are being done now by some Panchayats. In our social system we have been always looking upon Panchayats as the incarnation of God himself."[3] In March 1950, the new Bill was published in the official Gazette for eliciting public opinion. The object of the Bill was to reorganise the Village Panchayats in order to make them fully representative of the village communities and full-fledged autonomous units of self-government. The Bill proposed the creation of two bodies—the Gaon Sabha and the Gaon Panchayat, the first a representative body composed of adult men and women in every village with a population of 500 or more, the smaller villages being grouped together for the purpose of forming a Gaon Sabha, and the second an executive committee consisting of a Sarpanch, a Naib Sarpanch, and five to nine Panches. The Bill was welcomed in the State. The *Tribune* (9.3'50) wrote : "The provisions relating to the composition of the Panchayats mark a great improvement over the existing system......The scope of the administrative functions and the duties of the Panchayats have been considerably enlarged under the Bill."

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[1] See **Punjab on the March : Towards Better Villages**, issued by Public Relations Department, Punjab, March 1951, p. 8.

[2] **Tribune**, 15-1-'50.

[3] **Tribune**, 6-2-'50.

The Panchayat Act Of 1952

Certain developments, however, necessitated President's rule over Punjab and then came the General Elections of 1951-52, and so this Bill could not be enacted. The new Congress Ministry, which took office after the General Elections, had at its head Shri Bhimsen Sachar, noted for his strong advocacy of Panchayats. A new Panchayat Bill was drafted and presented to the State Assembly, which referred it to a Joint Select Committee. This Joint Select Committee Report was presented to the State Assembly by the then Local Self-Government Minister of the State, Shri Sri Ram Sharma, on November 21, 1952. The Bill was passed by the State Assembly in December 1952. The main provisions of the Punjab Gram Panchayat Act are described below.

Constitution Of Panchayats

Every village or group of villages with a population of 500 or more shall have one or more Gram Panchayat(s). This limit may be relaxed in suitable cases.

Each Gram Panchayat will consist of 5 to 9 members. The Panches will be elected by adult universal franchise by direct vote, and the prescribed number of candidates securing the highest number of valid votes will be considered to have been elected. Every voter for the Assembly will be automatically a Panchayat elector.

Seats have been reserved for the Scheduled Castes for a period of 10 years from the January 26, 1950, when the Constitution of India came into force. Where the population of the scheduled castes is not less than 10 per cent of the total population and no member of scheduled castes is among the first five, the scheduled caste candidate securing the highest number of votes amongst such candidates will be automatically the fifth Panch. If the number of members of a Panchayat is more than 6, two scheduled caste candidates securing the highest number of votes will be considered to have been elected.

The Panches will elect the Sarpanch from amongst themselves and they will hold office for three years. The Panchayat may remove the Sarpanch by a motion of no-confidence passed by at least 2|3rds of the Panches. No such motion can be sponsored without the previous permission of the Director of Panchayats. This provision is meant to eliminate frivolous and vexatious motions of no-confidence engineered for ulterior motives.

Members are liable for the loss, waste or mis-application of money and properties of the Panchayat when such loss, etc., is a result of their neglect or mis-conduct. The Assistant Director of Panchayats is competent to accept their resignation. They may be removed by Government on specified grounds. The Director may suspend them on such grounds or during the course of an enquiry. Removal entails disqualification for re-election for a period up to five years.

Panchayat Functions

The obligatory and discretionary functions of the Panchayats and their administrative powers are as follows :

(a) The Panchayats can make arrangements in respect of the following matters, including all subsidiary works and buildings connected therewith :

(i) any public place including its sanitation and drains;
(ii) wells, water pumps, *baolies,* springs, ponds and tanks for the supply of water for drinking, washing and bathing;
(iii) burial and cremation grounds;
(iv) lighting of public places;
(v) buildings for the accommodation of travellers;
(vi) ponds for animals;
(vii) the relief of the poor;
(viii) public health and sanitation;
(ix) organisation and celebration of public festivals;
(x) improvement of the breeds of animals used for agricultural or domestic purposes;
(xi) public gardens, play grounds, establishment and maintenance of recreation parks, organisation of games and sports, supply of sports material and holding of tournaments;
(xii) the development of agriculture and village industries and the destruction of weeds and pests;
(xiii) starting and maintaining a grain fund for the cultivators and lending them seed for sowing purposes on such conditions as the Panchayat may approve;

(xix) the construction, repair and maintenance of public places and buildings of public utility;

(xv) allotment of places for preparation and conservation o manure;

(xvi) construction and maintenance of culverts and bridges;

(xvii) laying out of new roads and pathways and the maintenance of existing ones.

(b) A Gram Panchayat may also maintain and manage maternity and child welfare centres, provide for medical relief and first aid, promote agricultural credit, establish first aid centres for animals and arrange relief against famine or other calamity.

(c) The Panchayats have powers to order removal of encroachments and nuisances.

(d) The Panchayats can issue general orders regulating :

(i) use of water of a well or pond;
(ii) steeping of hemp in ponds;
(iii) dyeing or tanning of skins;
(iv) excavation of earth or stone;
(v) establishing brick kilns, charcoal kilns and pottery kilns, etc.

(e) Gram Panchayats can impose a fine on any person who violates their orders. This fine may extend to twenty-five rupees. For a continuing breach of their orders the Panchayats may impose a fine which extends to one rupee for every day after the first breach of orders. The recurring fine may not exceed Rs. 500.

(f) The Panchayats have the power to make enquiries into the misconduct of petty officials like constables, *patwaris,* peons, bailiffs, etc., and to make reports to the superior officer to whom it may concern or to the Deputy Commissioner.

(g) The Panchayats can require a *patwari* or *chaukidar* to perform his duty and if he fails to do so, can report against him to his superior officer or to the Deputy Commissioner.

(h) The Panchayats can introduce prohibition in their jurisdiction.

(i) A Panchayat can make bye-laws consistent with the Gram Panchayat Act, 1952, and its Amendments, and can impose fines for the breach of these bye-laws. The bye-laws have to be confirmed by the Director of Panchayats.

(j) The Sarpanch or a duly authorised Panch of a Panchaya may enter any building or land and inspect it for a work authorised by the Panchayat.

(k) The Panchayat can acquire land through the Deputy Commissioner for public works.

(l) A number of Panchayats can combine to help in establishing a school, a hospital or an Ayurvedic and Unani dispensary.

(m) The Panchayats are authorised to appoint such servants as are considered necessary and to pay them remuneration out of the Gram Fund.

Judicial Aspect Of Panchayats

Every Gram Panchayat is given civil, criminal and judicial functions. Government have power to confer enhanced powers on the elected representatives of a group of Panchayats. In this case the Panchayats concerned will elect five Adalati Panches from amongst themselves by direct voting. The Adalati Panches will constitute the Adalati Panchayat. Enhanced criminal and civil powers may also be conferred by the State Government on selected Panchayats.

The District Judge in respect of civil suits and the Collector in respect of revenue suits and the District Magistrates as regards criminal cases may set aside or modify the orders of a Panchayat or direct a re-trial in case of failure of justice.

A Panchayat may in a criminal case impose a fine upto Rs. 100, or if given enhanced powers, upto Rs. 200 or double the value of the damage or loss involved. In civil jurisdiction, the maximum monetary limitation is Rs. 500 for Panchayats with enhanced jurisdiction and Rs. 200 for others.

Legal practitioners are debarred from pleading before a Panchayat in judicial proceedings.

The judicial procedure is kept simple and attempt has been made to avoid technicalities and complications keeping in view the fact that justice is to be administered by villagers with no judicial training.

Sources Of Revenue

The main sources of revenue are :

(a) grants-in-aid from Government for sanitation, education, etc.

(b) 10 per cent of the land revenue paid by the Gram Panchayat area;

(c) taxes; and

(d) income from common land, fees, fines and forfeitures.

There are two kinds of taxes: (i) compulsory, e.g., house tax; (ii) optional. Every Panchayat will have to impose a specified compulsory tax subject to the maximum rates laid down by Government. It may levy any other tax which the State Legislature has power to levy in the State but with the previous sanction of Government. It will also have power to borrow with the sanction of Government.

A Gram Panchayat may, with the previous permission of the Director, impose a special tax on the adult males for the construction of any public work of general utility. It may, however, exempt any man from payment of this special tax in lieu of community service. In an emergency, manual labour for public purposes may be compulsorily introduced without payment.

Control And Co-ordination

It is intended to have a pyramid of local authorities in rural areas organically liaised with one another. At the base of the pyramid there will be Gram Panchayat Unions consisting of all Sarpanches of the Gram Panchayats within the Thana. The duty of the Unions will be to advise the Gram Panchayats in the performance of administrative duties.

To maintain liaison between the Gram Panchayat and villagers, every Gram Panchayat is bound to hold general meetings of the voters twice a year in which the report of the working of the Gram Panchayat will be presented and the future programme for the development of the village formulated. Each village community will thus be a miniature republic.

A Directorate of Panchayats with a large regional staff will be responsible for general direction, control and supervision of Gram Panchayats. Deputy Commissioners and the State Government have also powers of control which are commonly provided for in all local government laws. The Deputy Commissioner may inspect records, properties, etc., of the Gram Panchayat, suspend any action, and provide for the performance of an administrative duty in case of default of a Panchayat.

An order of the Deputy Commissioner suspending executive action of the Panchayat is subject to confirmation, modification or rescission of Director. Government have power to call for proceedings and to make rules.

The First Panchayat Elections

The first general elections to nearly 9,000 village republics in the Punjab, covering 16,455 revenue villages were completed in mid-1953, and the Village Panchayats began functioning from August the same year. Reporting on the elections the correspondent of an esteemed daily said[1]: "The dignified and peaceful conduct of the villagers during the elections is a good omen which promises a bright era of Panchayat Raj in this border State." Nearly 50 per cent of the Panches were elected unopposed in many of the districts. The voting percentage was high, about 80 to 85 per cent on an average, as against 60 to 70 per cent in the 1951-52 General Elections. Women voters took interest in the elections beyond all expectations though the number of women candidates was meagre. In some cases, however, as for example in Ambala district, they defeated their men rivals with a thumping majority. The Harijans, besides securing the reserved seats, were successful in capturing a number of general seats.[1] According to the *Statesman* Correspondent, "the Communists......were a dismal failure in the rural areas and made no impression on the villagers with their promises to provide each with a buffalo and a piece of land." The Congress refrained from the elections on a Party basis, but 40 to 55 per cent of the successful candidates were Congressmen. The Akalis and Communists accounted for less than 10 per cent of the total votes polled.

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[1] **Statesman, 25.7.'53.**

The total expenditure in running the elections amounted to the very low figure of Rs. 1 lakh, whereas the Government had expected to spend Rs. 15 to 20 lakhs. Much economy was effected by the simplicity of voting procedure and by cutting down formalities over nominations. There was no paraphernalia of Government-made ballot boxes which had to be carried during the General Elections to all parts of the State, involving loss on transport, voluminous clerical work and much expenditure, officially estimated to be more than 3 crores. Empty ghee tins were used as ballot boxes.

On August 10, 1953, administering oath of office to newly elected Panches at Rohtak, Shri Bhimsen Sachar, then State's Chief Minister, said :[2] "The objective of the Punjab Government is to establish real Swaraj in villages. There is fundamental difference between the reign of British Government which aimed at exploitation of the people and the present democratic set-up which exists for the welfare of the masses." He added : "After wrenching power from foreigners, the Congress has passed on its authority to the masses and the establishment of Gram Panchayats under the new Act aims at entrusting the people with full control to manage their local affairs. Panches under the new Act have been given great authority and responsibility—they have been given judicial, administrative and financial powers. It now rests with them to justify the trust reposed in them by the Government and the people." Shri Sachar told the Panches that all possible encouragement would be given to those whose work was creditable, but warned that "Panchayats which failed to function satisfactorily and mismanaged their affairs would be penalised."

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[1] According to the annual review of the State Panchayat Department for 1953-54, out of total of 50,815 Panchayat members in the State, 9,036 are Harijans (Hindustan Times, 18.9.'54).

[2] Tribune, 13.8.'53.

Undesirable elements apparently did get elected. Shri D. D. Kapila, Director of Punjab Panchayats, told a correspondent[1] at Chandigarh on June 14, 1954, that 40 per cent of the total 60,000 Panches in over 9,000 Panchayats in the State were "undesirable." About 100 Panches were of doubtful character. He further disclosed that "undesirable" Panches shall be either reformed or removed in the interest of a healthy atmosphere in the villages. He stated that he had till then removed nearly 200 Panches for anti-national activities, like exhorting people not to contribute to the National Savings Campaign, getting drunk or mis-appropriation of Panchayat funds or harbouring bad characters.

Review Of Panchayat Work: Encouraging Progress

Very rightly the annual review of the Punjab Panchayat Department for 1953-54 said : "Despite feuds and factions, the co-operative spirit in which most of the Panchayats in Punjab are working for the welfare of the people is heartening." Panchayats have done creditable work in all spheres during the First Plan period. A total sum of Rs. 172.80 was raised by the Panchayats from their own sources, including voluntary contribution and taxes during this period.[2] Special tax under Section 87 of the Punjab Gram Panchayat Act to be paid in the form of compulsory labour or cash for carrying out special work was enforced in a large number of cases, particularly for destruction of locusts, construction of bunds against floods, etc. During the Plan period the Panchayats expended a total sum of Rs. 167 lakhs from their own funds on works of sanitation, development, including street pavements, drains, village roads, culverts, etc., and for libraries against a total Government grant of Rs. 90.13 lakhs for such work.

Panchayats in Punjab have, in fact, set an excellent example of self-help and co-operation in fostering constructive activity within their jurisdiction. Besides the activities enumerated above, they have repaired and constructed Panchayatghars, dispensaries, first aid centres, children's parks and recreation centres. Panchayats in the Punjab have shown special interest in the matter of education. This enthusiasm is indicated by the fact that in a single month, Panchayats in Kaithal Tehsil collected Rs. 86,000 for school buildings and their equipment. In Nikodar, they raised Rs. 5,000 for a high school.[3] In pursuance of the Government's decision to have a primary school in each village, 400 new schools were opened by the Panchayats between October 1953 and March 1954. On July 1, 1954, they were running 1,044 primary schools and progress has since been uniformly maintained. Apart from this, Panchayats collected more than Rs. 6 lakhs for construction of new school buildings, repair and extension of existing buildings and provision of furniture. In June 1954, the Government decided that new schools would be opened by the Education Department and the existing ones would be taken over from the Panchayats by October 1954. Now the Panchayats provide buildings and furnitures for the schools and drinking water facilities for students.

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[1] **Hindusthan Standard (Delhi edition) 15.6.'54.**

[2] **Vide article by S. N. Vasudev, Director of Panchayats, Punjab, in Tribune, dated 16.10.'55.**

[3] **Statesman (Delhi edition) 15.8.'54.**

Voluntary Contributions

In 1951-52, Rs. 50 lakhs were raised by the Panchayats through voluntary contributions for sanitation and water supply schemes. Against this amount, the Government decided to give a grant of Rs. 37½ lakhs in five yearly instalments. Accordingly, Rs. 8 lakhs were provided during 1952-53, Rs. 7½ lakhs in 1953-54 and another Rs. 7½ lakhs during 1954-55. The first two instalments have been disbursed to the Panchayat staff. By the end of the financial year 1953-54, works involving an expenditure of Rs. 14 lakhs were taken in hand by the Panchayats. Money was mainly spent for the purchase of cement and bricks, and labour was provided on a voluntary basis.

Judicial Work Of Panchayats

In the judicial sphere, Panchayats have handled quite a large number of cases. Many protracted suits have been compromised through their efforts. The number of cases decided in 1953-54 is as follows: Criminal cases—instituted 12,095, decided 9,328, compounded 6,227, dismissed 1,550 and convicted 1,540; civil suits: instituted 11,087, decided 8,484, compromised 5,587, dismissed 1,239 and decreed 1,649.

Panchayats used their good offices in effecting compromises between landowners and tenants in several districts. Many ejectment notices were withdrawn as a result of their efforts. In Ferozepore, Panchayats were able to effect compromises in 5,000 cases and in Gurdaspur in over 9,000 cases.

In accordance with Section 19 of the Gram Panchayat Act, Panchayats are enjoined to arrange village patrol under the Village and Small Town Patrol Act. Most of the Panchayats have provided the patrols. A proposal to place *chowkidars* directly under them is under the consideration of the Government and if this materialises it will strengthen their hands.

In Ferozepore and Karnal districts some Panchayats have adopted resolutions for stopping sale of liquor and removal of liquor shops from their jurisdiction. They are mobilizing public opinion in favour of prohibition.

A drive was launched by the Panchayat Department in 1954 for removal of untouchability from the rural areas. Five hundred and fifty-four Panchayats certified that untouchability has been removed. The district-wise break up was as follows : Hissar 67, Karnal 34, Ludhiana 43, Jullundur 157, Kangra 62 and Gurdaspur 191.

Panchayats played a significant role in popularising the National Plan Loan. According to the Punjab Panchayat Department review for 1953-54, Rs. 85,00,000 were contributed through their efforts. The maximum amount contributed by a Panchayat member was Rs. 76,000.

The beneficial work done by the Panchayats is obvious. This advance has to be viewed in the background that for the first time in June-July 1953, the entire rural adult population of Punjab took part in a huge election to elect upwards of 50,000 representatives, a large number of whom were illiterate or were elected for the first time. It is not surprising, therefore, that some undesireable elements got in. The Panchayat Review for 1953-54 says : "There is no denying the fact that a large number of undesireable Panches have found their way to Panchayats as a result of elections. Naturally, they started obstructing the smooth working of Panchayats by opposing the imposition of the house tax, embezzling Panchayat funds, fostering indiscipline and abusing and assaulting fellow Panches. It was decided to purge the Panchayats of such undesirable elements. Two hundred and eighty-one Panches were suspended. Out of them 22 have been reinstated on their tendering an apology and promise to reform themselves."

The Panchayat Department quickly reacted to the situation. Ten experienced Panchayat officers from the field staff, along with two permanent educational Panchayat Officers, were entrusted with the task of training the members. About 30 centres were opened at convenient places in each district and 41,733 members were imparted elementary training in Panchayat work within three months. The duration of training was two days for a batch.

To assist members in the performance of their duties and to guide them generally, the Government recommended the appointment of a secretary for a group of 10 to 12 Panchayats. Some of the Panchayats opposed these appointments on the ground that they had educated members. They were firmly told that a Secretary had not only to attend to clerical work but also to maintain proper accounts, prepare copies of judgements and keep a record of documents. As a result of the Government advice, about 90 per cent of the Panchayats have appointed secretaries.

Conclusion

The Punjab Panchayats can thus lay claim to very solid work done, and the Punjab administration deserves credit for the attention it has bestowed on fostering this movement. It would appear that the creation of intermediate units between the State and Village Panchayats for better coordination and results, as also some other schemes for better Panchayat development are engaging the attention of the Government. Punjab's Development Minister, Sardar Pratap Singh Kairon (now Chief Minister), told a meeting at Sidhwan Bet in Ludhiana district towards the end of 1955 that "The State Government planned to have a Panchayat in every village. Under the scheme, the number of Panchayats in the State would rise from 9,000 to 16,000."[1] A few months later, in February 1955, Shri Bhimsen Sachar, then State's Chief Minister, told a Panchayat audience in the backward area of Naraingarh in Ambala district that the State Government was thinking of establishing an institution to replace the District Boards in Punjab. The scheme, which envisaged the setting up of committees charged with the task of improving the lot of the rural population at tehsil level, would have members elected by Panchayats. Shri Sachar visualised that the proposed institution would have direct contact with the masses and wield more powers than the District Boards and would be able to solve the problems of the masses expeditiously. No final shape, it would appear, has been given to the schemes of Panchayat reorganisation, but the matter is under discussion and formulation.

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[1] **Hindustan Times**, 2.11.'54.

TABULAR REPRESENTATION IV

No. of Villages Number of Panchayats, etc.	Legislation		Village Panchayats	
	Law Passed	Amendment	How Constituted	Powers in V. Management
1. 16,455 (Revenue Estates) Villages. 2. All of them covered by 9,177 Panchayats. 3. A village with a population of 500 or more has a Panchayat. If population of any is less, it is grouped with the continguous village or villages so that the total population of all the villages so grouped is not less than 500, to be constituted as Panchayat.	1. The Punjab Panchayat Act, 1912. 2. Punjab Village Panchayat Rules, 1939. 3. The Punjab Gram Panchayat Act, 1952 4. The Gram Panchayat Election Rules, 1953.	1. The Punjab Gram Panchayat (Amendment) Ordinance, 1953.	1. Based on Adult Suffrage. 2. Panches are elected by direct vote by all adults entered as voter on the electoral rolls for the State Legislative Assembly in force for the time being. 3. Vote by secret ballot. Area not divided into wards. 4. No provision for nomination of any part of Panchayat. 5. If Sarpanch or a sufficient No. of Adalati Panches are not elected or casual vacancy not filled in prescribed time there is provision for nomination. 6. The No. of Panches shall be from five to nine. 7. One scheduled caste member for 5 and 2 when more than 6 or 6. 8. Sarpanch to be elected by members.	1. Primarily Administrative. 2. One of the duties is to arrange for sanitation. Other duties are:— a) Lightning of public places. b) Relief to poor. c) Pounds for animals. d) Public and playgrounds, etc. e) Libraries, etc. f) Development of village industries. g) Laying out new roads, etc. h) It can make general orders to regulate or prohibit the use of water of a well or a pond or establishment of brick kilns within 830 yds. of *abadi*. i) Medical rules, etc. 3. V. P. can fine up to Rs. 25 for defying its rules. 4. By at least 2|3rd of votes of Panches a Panchayat can introduce prohibition.

PANCHAYAT INSTITUTION IN PUNJAB

Gram Panchayats' Sources of Revenue	Nyaya Panchayats		Reports of Work		REMARKS
	How Constituted	Powers	Village Panchayats	Nyaya Panchayats	
1. Grants from Govt. and Local Bodies. 2. Fees and fines received under Govt. Panchayat Act, 1952. 3. 10% of the Land Revenue paid by the Gram Panchayat Area to the Govt. 4. Imposition of House Tax is obligatory on Panchayat. It is felt Govt. may take steps to impose this tax. 5. By the permission of Director of Panchayats may impose special tax on the adult male members of area for construction of any public work of general utility. 6. Panchayats with the previous sanction of State legislature may levy another tax. 7. Govt. gives Rs. 10,000 every year as grant for the expansion of libraries in the Panchayats.	The Gram Panchayats shall work as Nyaya or Adalati Panchayat also.	Instead of Nyaya Panchayats Gram Panchayats shall work and exercise judicial powers. 1) Criminal and civil both. 2) The pecuniary limit of jurisdiction is Rs. 200 in respect of civil suit. 3) Can try some offences under IPC such as 323, 379, 411, 426 and 447, etc., and offences under the Vaccination Act, Cattle Trespass Act, etc. 4) Can on conviction sentence the accused to a fine not exceeding Rs. 100.	Panchayats have collected Rs. 50 lacs for sanitation and deposited Rs. 1,28,735 towards the National Savings Drive. 2) Panchayats have organised Young Farmer's Clubs. 3) Panchayats started 595 libraries during last year. 4) Have repaired and constructed as many as 592 schools.	Many works of Public Health and Utility were executed. Grow more Food Campaign was also taken with great enthusiasm. In the field of Nyaya have lessened burden on courts. Locust Destruction work was a remarkable feature of Panchayats in State.	1) The main handicap is poor finance. 2) 10% of Land Revenue and Govt. help is inadequate. 3) But there is much enthusiasm amongst the masses for contributing in voluntary labour, etc. 4) Panchayats can run community centres with a Library and reading room. 5) Panchayats are proving that they are really rural Municipalities.

CHAPTER XV

MADHYA PRADESH

THE State of Madhya Pradesh as constituted today includes the old Central Provinces and Berar as well as the 14 integrated Chattisgarh States and the Bhopal Agency State of Makrai. Forming a large triangle midway between Bombay and West Bengal, with an area of 1,30,272 square miles, this State is the largest in area in the Indian Union. Situated in the centre of the Indian Peninsula, it comprises a large portion of the broad belt of hills and plateau country which separates the Northern Plains from the Deccan. Compared in extent with other countries of the world, it is larger than the British Isles or Italy and a little smaller than Japan or Germany.

Growing Pressure Of Population

The population of Madhya Pradesh according to the 1951 Census was 2,12,47,533 of which 28,77,339 or 13.54 per cent was urban and 1,83,70,194 or 86.46 per cent was rural. The State has 22 districts, 111 tehsils, 142 towns and 48,444 villages. In 1941 there were 19 districts in the State with a population of 1,96,31,615. Thus in the decade 1941-1951, the population increased by 8.2 per cent. This increase, apart from the natural increase by births, is also undoubtedly due to the merger of new territories in the old Central Provinces and Berar in 1948. In 1951 the population of the State had doubled compared to the population returned by the 1872 Census, as would be clear from the following table[1]:

TABLE 53

Decade ending	Persons	Mean decennial growth-rate	Density
1872 ..	1,07,96,004	..	83
1881 ..	1,32,28,516	20.3	102
1891 ..	1,46,48,464	10.2	112
1901 ..	1,34,64,782	−8.4	103
1911 ..	1,58,63,697	16.4	122
1921 ..	1,57,96,282	−0.4	121
1931 ..	1,77,91,896	11.9	137
1941 ..	1,96,31,615	9.8	151
1951 ..	2,12,47,533	7.9	163

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[1] Census of India, 1951, Vol. VII, Madhya Pradesh, Part I-A Report by J. D. Kerawalla and H. N. Banerjee, p. 11.

Number Of Villages And Distribution Of Rural And Urban Population

This great increase in population and its density has increased he pressure on land and has resulted in further impoverishment f this potentially rich industrial area. District-wise distribution f villages and the percentage distribution of rural and urban population in each district would be found in the following table[1] :

TABLE 54

District	Villages	Percentage of rural population to total population	Percentage of urban population to total population
Nagpur ..	1,667	53.21	46.79
Wardha ..	930	76.65	23.35
Chanda ..	2,494	90.54	9.46
Chhindwara ..	3,474	93.20	6.80
Betul ..	1,272	92.53	7.47
Jabalpur ..	2,320	71.42	28.58
Sagar ..	2,975	83.18	16.82
Mandla ..	2,067	97.40	2.60
Hoshangabad ..	2,390	84.30	15.70
Nimar ..	1,058	76.69	23.31
Raipur ..	3,770	92.32	7.68
Bilaspur ..	3,372	96.14	3.86
Durg ..	4,081	94.71	5.29
Bastar ..	3,154	97.95	2.05
Surguja ..	2,430	97.41	2.59
Raigarh ..	2,329	94.03	5.97
Bhandara ..	1,491	91.42	8.58
Balaghat ..	1,304	95.04	4.96
Amravati ..	1,567	72.56	27.44
Yeotmal ..	1,634	88.01	11.99
Akola ..	1,477	77.89	22.11
Buldana ..	1,188	83.50	16.50

Madhya Pradesh Villages

The Report of the Central Provinces Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee said the following about a *mauza* or village of the State: "The population of the village is concentrated in one common residential site, known as the *abadi* in the Central Provinces and the

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[1] Source : **Statistical Outline of Madhya Pradesh**, published by Director Economics and Statistics, Madhya Pradesh; Table 6 on p. 5.

gaothan in Berar. The site is usually near the water supply but on land sufficiently high to prevent monsoon floods." And further: "The *abadi* or village site is often congested and when a village site is completely filled, or where for social reasons any class such as an untouchable caste is required to live apart, small hamlets are sometimes formed, which may be situated at some distance from the main *abadi*." For purposes of the Census, the village was defined as "the area, demarcated as a *mauza* for revenue purposes" and not treated as a town or city. Hamlets included in the area of a *mauza* were not treated as separate villages. The *mauza* or village was thus theoretically an administrative unit rather than a geographical entity, although in actual practice this made little difference.

The overwhelming number of villages in Madhya Pradesh have less than 500 population. They number 37,339. Villages with a population between 500 and 1,000 number 8,149, those between 1,000 and 2,000 numbering 2,409. Thus a little more than 500 villages have a population of 2,000 and above. The large rural population of 18.37 million souls living in 48,444 villages gives an average population of 379 persons per village. In 1941, the territory which now is Madhya Pradesh had 48,184 villages and the average population per village was 407. The average population per village according to the 1921 Census was 306. The Madhya Pradesh Census Report for 1951 has characterised villages with a population of 2,000 and above as 'large,' those between 500 and 2,000 'medium' and those with 500 and less as 'small.' The largest number of people (47.6 per cent) reside in medium-sized villages, only about 9.4 per cent in large villages and about 43 per cent in small villages. About 1.5 per cent of the population of the State lives in villages with population of over 5,000. Say Kerawalla and Banerjee : "Normally places with population of over 5,000 are regarded as towns, but these villages have not been so treated on account of their distinct rural characteristics." In all there are 45 such villages in the State, and in 19 out of them the percentage of non-agricultural classes is greater than that of the agricultural classes.[1]

Occupational Distribution Of Population

The occupational distribution of the total population of Madhya Pradesh would be found in Table 55 (p. 387)[2].

The occupational pattern for the rural population reveals that 85.4 per cent of the rural population of Madhya Pradesh belongs to

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[1] Census of India, 1951, Vol. VII, Madhya Pradesh, Part I-A, Op. cit., p. 70.

[2] Statistical Outline of Madhya Pradesh, Op. cit., p. 4.

TABLE 55

Livelihood Categories	Population (in 000's)	Percentage
Cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned	10,519	49.51
Cultivators of land wholly or mainly unowned	949	4.47
Cultivating labourers	4,336	20.41
Non-cultivating owners and agricultural rent-receivers	344	1.61
TOTAL AGRICULTURAL . .	16,148	76.00
TOTAL NON-AGRICULTURAL . .	5,099	24.00
GRAND TOTAL	21,247	100.00

he agricultural classes and about 14.6 per cent to the non-agricultural classes. The distribution of rural population among the agricultural classes is as follows : Class I—56.0 per cent; Class II—5.0 per cent; Class III—22.7 per cent; Class IV—1.7 per cent. The livelihood pattern of the rural population in the Natural Divisions of he State is compared in the following table[1] giving the number of persons per 10,000 of rural population :

TABLE 56

State and Natural Division	Number per 10,000 of rural population in Livelihood Class					
	I	II	III	IV	Total Agricultural	Total non-agricultural
Madhya Pradesh . .	5,598	499	2,276	171	8,544	1,456
North-West Madhya Pradesh Division . .	5,405	508	2,024	214	8,151	1,849
East Madhya Pradesh Division . .	6,593	331	1,731	109	8,764	1,236
South-West Madhya Pradesh Division . .	3,489	833	3,838	266	8,476	1,524

Thus, in East Madhya Pradesh Division, the largest number of people belong to Livelihood Category I, that is, cultivators of owned lands. In South-West Madhya Pradesh Division, the agricultural labourers (Category III) have a high figure. This is attributed to the preponderance of cotton cultivation in this tract, which requires a large labour force.

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[1] Census of India, 1951, Vol. VII, Madhya Pradesh, Part I-A, Report, Op. cit., p. 83.

The Livelihood Pattern Of Agricultural Classes

According to Subsidiary Table 4.1 in Part I-B of Madhya Pradesh Census Report, of the total agricultural classes, 65.14 per cent belong to Livelihood Class I, 5.88 per cent to Livelihood Class II, 26.85 per cent to Livelihood Class III and 2.13 per cent to Livelihood Class IV. The following table[1] gives the percentage distribution of agricultural classes in different Livelihood Classes in Madhya Pradesh and the Natural Divisions :

TABLE 57

State and Natural Division	Percentage of all agricultural classes belonging to Livelihood Class			
	I	II	III	IV
Madhya Pradesh ..	65.14	5.88	26.85	2.13
North-West Madhya Pradesh Division	66.19	6.30	24.75	2.76
East Madhya Pradesh Division	75.24	3.77	19.70	1.29
South-West Madhya Pradesh Division	41.31	10.20	45.11	3.38

Agricultural Holdings: Preponderance Of Uneconomic Units

The high percentage in Livelihood Category I, that is, cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned, as also the low figure for Category IV, that is, non-cultivating owners and agricultural rent-receivers, is due to the definition of ownership of land adopted for Census enumeration.[2] Ownership of land, however, does not necessarily signify a prosperous tenantry, as would be apparent from Table 58 (p. 389)[3] which gives agricultural holdings in Madhya Pradesh classified according to area owned.

It follows that almost one-fifth of the holdings are less than 1 acre, nearly 38 per cent are less than 2.5 acres, and holdings of 5 acres and less number 26,48,544 out of a total of 44,58,338, that

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[1] Ibid, p. 127.

[2] Kerawalla and Banerjee say : "It is to be remembered that ownership of agricultural land for purposes of Census includes such tenures as those of "Raiyats" in Raiyatwari villages and "occupancy tenants" in Malguzari or other villages. The test of ownership is existence of a right which should be heritable, but may or may not be transferable. Therefore, all tenants, who hold such tenancy and who cultivate the land, would be regarded as owners of the land. It is on account of this definition of ownership of land that we find a large number of people under Livelihood Class I and comparatively few under Class IV. The Malguzars and zamindars really owned estates and not the lands in the estates. Lands in the estates were always owned by the innumerable people of Livelihood Class I" (Ibid, p. 52-53).

[3] Based upon Census of Landholdings conducted by the Land Reforms Division of the Planning Commission. Published in A.I.C.C. Economic Review, Vol. VII, No. 8-9, Whole No. 129-130, dated August 15, 1955, p. 123.

TABLE 58

Grade for holding in acres		No. of holdings	Area owned (acres)	Area given on lease (acres)
Upto 1		9,02,841	3,76,935	30,368
Exceeding	But not exceeding			
1	2.50	8,59,295	14,70,663	1,27,696
2.50	5.00	8,86,408	32,28,326	2,98,645
5.00	7.50	5,13,010	31,46,534	2,96,718
7.50	10.00	3,29,166	28,41,002	2,74,418
10.00	12.50	2,19,935	24,60,386	2,37,904
12.50	15.00	1,65,864	21,31,460	2,10,074
15.00	17.50	1,12,726	18,23,083	1,80,207
17.50	20.00	84,949	15,86,508	1,55,543
20.00	25.00	1,14,698	25,60,372	2,53,797
25.00	30.00	72,953	19,94,825	2,03,099
30.00	35.00	48,233	15,58,899	1,62,852
35.00	40.00	32,823	12,31,991	1,97,122
40.00	45.00	23,955	10,15,495	1,05,415
45.00	50.00	17,872	8,45,494	92,753
50.00	60.00	24,075	13,14,019	1,50,515
60.00	75.00	20,251	13,50,070	1,66,970
75.00	100.00	16,463	14,08,251	1,88,483
100.00	150.00	12,199	14,69,521	2,30,717
150.00	200.00	4,473	7,67,586	1,44,845
200.00	300.00	3,287	7,87,147	1,71,445
300.00	500.00	1,749	6,55,261	1,77,497
500.00	1,000.00	780	5,26,034	1,78,870
More than	1,000	333	6,53,096	2,87,332
	Total	44,58,338	3,72,01,899	44,63,084

is, about 60 per cent. It is obvious that the vast majority of cultivators in Madhya Pradesh cultivate uneconomic holdings.

The General Family Survey of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry surveyed 60 sample villages in Madhya Pradesh. The families living in these villages numbered 4,988, comprising 23,733 persons. Says the Report of the Survey: "Although there were 4,988 families. . . .the total number of holdings held by them in the villages was only 2,477. Some of the families held joint shares in the holdings of others while many were landless." And further: "The size of holdings bore a vital relation to the economic status of the holders. Holdings of agricultural owners were the biggest, the average size being 36.43 acres as against 13.35 acres in the case of tenants, 6.8 acres for agricultural workers and 6.06 acres for non-agriculturists." The Survey also points out: "Of the 2,477 holdings, 139 or 5.6 per cent were under 1 acre and 331 or 13.3 per cent were in the size group '1 acre and under 2.5 acres'. Nearly 50 per cent of the agricultural workers' holdings were under 7.5 acres. The holdings of agricultural owners were concentrated in the size group '10 acres and under 25 acres', but nearly 38 per cent were above 25 acres in size. The majority of tenants' holdings were under 10 acres, and a little less than 50 per cent were under 7.5 acres. Those of agricultural workers and non-agriculturists were mainly under 5 acres, their maximum concentration being in the size group '1 acre and under 2.5 acres'."[1]

The Agricultural Labourers

As for the agricultural labourers, their preponderance in South-West Madhya Pradesh Division would have been noticed in the tables given earlier in this Chapter. It would appear that their proportion in the total population has come down in the course of the last fifty years. Table[2] below gives the percentage of field labourers and farm servants (including non-earning dependents) to the adjusted population for the years 1901 to 1921 and 1951:

TABLE 59

Nature Division and State	Percentage of field labourers and farm servants in the total population			
	1901	1911	1921	1951
Madhya Pradesh	26.2	27.6	26.9	20.4
North-West Madhya Pradesh Division	21.7	25.8	25.7	17.4
East Madhya Pradesh Division ..	21.8	17.4	21.1	16.4
South-West Madhya Pradesh Division	46.8	39.7	37.9	30.7

The General Village Survey of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry, which surveyed 60 villages with a total population of 23,801 and 4,991 families, gives the occupational classification of families as shown in Table 60 (p. 391).

Thus, out of 4,991 families, 4,291 or 86 per cent were agriculturists, and of these 39.9 per cent families were those of agricultural workers (25.3 per cent without land and 14.6 per cent with land).

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[1] Rural Manpower and Occupational Structure, Op. cit., p. 96.

[2] Census of India, 1951, Vol. VII, Madhya Pradesh, Part I-A, Report, Op. cit., p. 53. In 1931 non-earning dependents were not enumerated and there was no tabulation for occupations in 1941.

TABLE[1] 60

Zone	No. of Villages	Population	Total No. of families	Average size of family	No. of Agricultural Families			
					Owners	Tenants	Agricultural workers	Total
Cotton-Jowar	15	6,845	1,506	4.6	200	266	905	1,371
Wheat	15	5,528	1,218	4.5	51	532	325	908
Rice	30	11,428	2,267	5.0	97	1,177	762	2,012
TOTAL	60	23,801	4,991		348	1,975	1,992	4,291

The General Family Survey gives the following occupational distribution of families[2]:

TABLE 61

		Agricultural landownership	Agricultural tenancy	Agricultural Labour			Total agricultural families	Total non-agricultural families	All families
				With land	Without land	Total			
All	(a)	346	1,947	737	1,261	1,998	4,291	685	4,988
Sample	(b)	1,824	10,101	3,773	5,612	8,785	20,710	3,010	23,733
Villages	(c)	5.28	5.19	5.12	3.97	4.39	4.83	4.39	4.76

(a) Total number of families
(b) Total number of persons
(c) Average size of family.

Says the Survey Report :[3] "Madhya Pradesh is one of the States where agricultural workers form a substantial proportion of the population. Nearly 40 per cent of the families in the sample villages belonged to this class. Of the 1,998 families of agricultural workers, 737 or 36.9 per cent had some land while 1,261 or 63.1 per cent were landless. The percentage of agricultural workers' families to the total number of families differed widely in three zones. While 26.8 per cent of the families in the Wheat zone and 33.78 per cent in the Rice zone were agricultural workers, the corresponding percentage in the Cotton-Jowar zone was as high as 60.3".

The Panchayat Act Of 1946

As early as 1946, immediately after the last general elections with limited franchise held in India under the British regime, the popular Congress Ministry took steps aimed at reviving the Panchayat institution. The Central Provinces and Berar Panchayats Bill, 1946 (11 of 1946) was introduced in the State Assembly on September 4, 1946. The Bill was referred to a Select Committee and later passed by the Provincial Assembly on November 16, 1946. The Bill as enacted was enforced in 1947. And on August 15, 1948, the Janapada Sabha Scheme was also introduced in the State, which, in effect, was aimed at implementing the policy of decentralisation of power.

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[1] **Agricultural Wages in India, Vol. I,** Op. cit., p. 95.

[2] **Rural Manpower and Occupational Structure,** Op. cit. from table on p. 90.

[3] **Ibid. p. 88.**

The Janapada Sabha Scheme

The Gram Panchayats were made an integral part of the Janapada Sabha. The districts were divided into a convenient number of Janapadas in a manner similar to that adopted in the sub-divisional system of administration. The old Sub-Divisional Officer continued to discharge revenue and judicial functions, but became subordinate to the Chief Executive Officer of the Janapada Sabha. This Chief Executive Officer was invested with the powers of an Additional Deputy Commissioner and an Additional District Magistrate. He was made responsible to the State Government through the Deputy Commissioner for the transaction of revenue business and the maintenance of law and order within his jurisdiction and permitted to correspond direct with the Government, keeping his Deputy Commissioner informed of it.

As stated, the jurisdiction of the Janapada Sabha was combined to a sub-division or tehsil or taluk, roughly an area of 1,500 to 2,000 square miles and a population of 2 to 3 lakhs. The membership of the Sabha extended from 20 to 40 Councillors, on the basis of one Councillor for about 10,000 people. The Councillors are to be elected both from rural and urban areas within the jurisdiction of the Janapada Sabha on the basis of adult franchise. In the first instance, however, these Sabhas were nominated by the Government. The Janapada Sabha functions through six Standing Committees, namely, Finance, Public Works, Education, Agriculture, Development and Public Health. Each of these Committees has an independent Chairman elected by the Standing Committee itself. The State Government had reserved to itself the power to delegate any function to the Janapada Sabha except those relating to Revenue, Police and Law and Order.

The Janapada Sabhas have close association with other local authorities in their areas. In respect of their ordinary functions, Gram Panchayats, municipalities, regulated market committees, etc., work independently but the Janapada Sabhas have got a supervisory control.

It is thus apparent that the most important and numerous work of the Sabha would lie with the Gram Panchayats, municipalities in rural areas being few and far between. Gram Panchayats, in fact, are an integral part of the Janapada Scheme and one of the most important functions of the Janapada Sabha is to ensure proper working of Panchayats.

Recommendations Of A Committee Regarding Village Panchayats

Before we proceed to discuss the Madhya Pradesh Panchayat legislation, we would like to draw attention to the recommendations relating to Village Panchayats of a Sub-Committee appointed by the Provincial Rural Development Board. Importance attaches to this Report because of some leading Gandhites who were associated with it. Its Chairman was Dr. W. S. Barlingay, then Public Works Minister, and among its members were Kaka Kalelkar and Dr. J. C. Kumarappa. At its meeting held on October 26, 1947, the Committee said the following about 'Village Organisation':

"There will have to be a Village Panchayat for each village or a group of villages elected on adult franchise, the villages being divided into wards......for the purpose. The Panchayat will have direct responsibility in regard to all village services, such as, village roads, village water-supply, village education, village dispensaries, village sanitation, administration of justice within certain limits, village lighting, etc. These services will have to be compulsorily provided for in every village. If the revenue raised and allotted is not sufficient to provide for those services the deficit should be borne by Government.

"There will be another set of services like libraries, village halls, exhibitions, etc., which should be paid for partly by local contributions and partly by Government. There should be a Panchayat Union for all the Panchayats in the selected areas. The duty of such a Union will be to link up the various essential services under the Village Panchayats. The Union will thus guide, supervise and co-ordinate the activities of Village Panchayats and audit their accounts. The Union will further undertake secondary or post-basic education and maintain bigger hospitals and maternity homes. An Assistant Engineer attached to the Union will prepare estimates and execute all works. The Union of Panchayats will consist of representatives from the various Panchayats in the centre. It will get contributions from the Panchayats and grants from the Government."

The Committee added: "The Village Panchayats should be something more than mere administrative agencies. They should help in training villagers generally in civic responsibility, giving every adult knowledge of the rights and duties of village citizenship. They should also take up the tasks of social reforms, like the abolition of common vices such as gambling, etc., abolition of superstitions and social evils, like untouchability, etc. Special organised efforts will have to be made for the uplift and assimilation in the body politic of the society of sections like Harijans and *Adivasis* who have been victims of social injustice. The unfortunate condition of women is a more serious problem which cannot be tackled singly by an institution or a department. It is a matter of awakening social conscience and overcoming old prejudices. Special attention will have to be paid in this direction. A few women workers having practical approach and some knowledge of home science (cooking, medicines, weaving, tailoring, etc.) may prove useful for this work."

Constitution Of Panchayats

The total number of villages in the State is about 48,000. Of this, nearly 8,000 have been covered by Village Panchayats. The formation of Gram Panchayats has been split into three phases. The first phase consisted of villages having a population of 1,000 or more. The second phase comprised villages having a population between 500 and 1,000. The first phase was completed as far back as the year 1949 except in the merged areas. The second phase had made considerable progress in 1954-55. The third phase includes villages and hamlets with a population of less than 500. Gram Panchayats have thus been formed on the basis of one Panchayat for one village except in very few cases.

The Gram Panchayats are to be formed on the basis of adult suffrage, but till 1955 they were constituted by nomination. It was laid down in the Central Provinces and Berar Village Panchayats Act, 1946, that the first set of Panches of a Gram Panchayat would be nominated by the Government. This provision was prompted on the assumption that with lack of education and total absence of civic training, the people could neither elect proper persons as Panches, nor could the latter be expected to appreciate the responsibilities devolving on them. This, we feel, was a rather unfortunate idea which took away much of the value of this early attempt at rural democracy in Madhya Pradesh.

The Government picked the best persons available in the villages and thus started the experiment in village self-government. By 1953, the Government felt that the rural people have understood the nature and the value of Panches, and that the need for nomination was no longer there. Accordingly, the Government amended the relevant section in the Act in December 1953, and provided for the formation of Panchayats on the basis of election only. The election rules were later framed. The system of ballot voting was adopted. The area of a Gram Panchayat is divided into wards, each of which is to elect one or more members. This provision precludes the possibility of the Panchayat becoming the close preserve of a few influential families in the village and incidentally secures representation for members of backward communities, who generally reside in separate localities. Now there is no provision for nomination of any part of the membership of the Gram Panchayat. Only the Sarpanch of a Gram Panchayat is empowered to nominate his deputy for convenience in transaction of day-to-day business.

Panchayat Powers

The powers of the Panchayats are fairly comprehensive. The administrative and development functions have been separated from judicial functions, the former having been entrusted to Gram Panchayats and the latter to Nyaya Panchayats. A Gram Panchayat performs social and public health functions as well as certain municipal functions. Provision exists in the Act enabling a Gram Panchayat to realise land revenue of the village and to perform the functions of *patel* or *mukaddam*. Their duties and functions have been divided under two heads—compulsory and optional (vide, Sections 30 and 31 of the Act).

The benefits generally secured by the people of a village from the Gram Panchayat are: periodical repairs and maintenance of *abadi* roads and lanes; arrangements for the supply of water; street-lighting and conservancy. Different Gram Panchayats have given varying emphasis to these items, but an overall view of working of the Panchayats shows considerable achievement in the matter of education, public health, communications, development in co-operative movement and other welfare activities.

Nyaya Panchayats

Nyaya Panchayats perform judicial functions. They can try civil suits up to the value of Rs. 100, though they can accept suits up to the value of Rs. 500 with the consent of both the parties. They try criminal cases under certain sections of the Indian Penal Code (vide Schedule Section 68). Except these functions, the Nyaya Panchayats are closely linked with Gram Panchayats. Each Nyaya Panchayat has a circle, which includes a minimum number of three Gram Panchayats and anything from 20 to 30 non-Gram Panchayat villages. The seat of the Nyaya Panchayat is in one of the villages in the circle which is centrally situated and has the facilities of bazar, post-office and easy means of communications. Each constituent Gram Panchayat is required to make a certain annual contribution to the funds of the Nyaya Panchayat. This contribution is one-eighth of the total annual income in the case of a Gram Panchayat having an annual income of Rs. 1,000 and one-tenth in case of a Gram Panchayat having larger annual income.

The Nyaya Panches are nominated from amongst the Gram Panches and the basis for this nomination is educational qualification, social status and reputation for integrity.

The experience of the working of Nyaya Panchayats in recent years has been on the whole happy. They have, undoubtedly, succeeded in reducing litigation in the villages. To say that all Nyaya Panchayats have discharged the duties with equal measure of efficiency and impartiality would be to make a tall claim. The general level of education and of civic consciousness is bound to be reflected in the conduct of the Nyaya Panches, but by and large, they have done their job well.

Sources Of Revenue

A Gram Panchayat has certain assured sources of revenue and has powers to raise additional amounts of money in return for services provided by it. There is a compulsory cess on land revenue or rent at the rate of -|-|6 per rupee. There are also compulsory taxes like tax on buildings and non-agricultural land ranging from Rs. 2 to Rs. 80 per annum. Then there is a tax on profession varying from -|8|- to Rs. 5 and a licence fee ranging from Re. 1 to Rs. 30 for persons practising the calling of broker, commission agent, weigher or measurer within the Panchayat area. Then there are optional taxes which include tolls on vehicles, pack animals, bazar dues, fees on the registration of animals sold in the market, fees on vehicles, drainage fee, lighting fee and water rate where the Panchayat provides these services. Apart from these sources, the Gram Panchayat can get a grant from a non-lapsable village development fund equal to 5% of its land revenue for any measure of public utility on contributing a like amount. The State Government pay a sum of Rs. 200 and 300 to each Gram and Nyaya Panchayat respectively at the initial stage in two instalments for purchasing essential articles, etc., so as to enable the Panchayat to start work with immediate effect. A Nyaya Panchayat derives its income from Gram Panchayats, amount recovered as fines, fees charged on execution of decrees and issue of certified copies, fees on account of spot enquiries, fees on account of inspection of judicial records, court and process fees and decretal amount and costs.

Panchayat Expenditure

The normal expenditure of Gram Panchayats is on the following heads :

i) Establishment charges,
ii) Contribution to Nyaya Panchayats,
iii) Sanitation, water supply, public health, etc.

The proportion of expenditure on the first two items and the last item is nearly half and half. The main items of expenditure of Nyaya Panchayats are :

i) Establishment charges;
ii) Rent of building;
iii) Payment to process server; and
iv) Payment of decretal amount and costs.

The Gram Panchayat has to make necessary provision in its budget estimates and get it approved by the Janapada authority. Special sanction of the Janapada authority has to be obtained for each work costing more than Rs. 250. As regards the works not falling under Sections 30 and 31 of the Panchayat Act, Gram Panchayats are competent to make necessary grants-in-aid by obtaining previous approval of the Janapada authority. It is not necessary for Gram Panchayats to obtain Government sanction in respect of expenditure which they may incur in connection with the constructive activities under the Panchayat Act.

Panchayat Staff

Sarpanches of the Gram Panchayat established for the first time under the Act were nominated by the Government. The Amendment to the Act directed their election by members of the Gram Panchayat. Every Gram Panchayat has a secretary who has to render assistance to the Gram Panchayat for performing constructive works. The present secretary shall be replaced by a village assistant who shall be a Government servant. The first secretary of a Gram Panchayat was appointed by the Government but expenditure on account of his salary and allowances was debitable to Gram Panchayat Funds. He holds office for the same term as the Panchayat to which he is appointed. As regards village assistants, their conditions of appointment shall be regulated in accordance with the Rules applicable to Government servants in similar cadres, but the expenditure on account of their salary, etc., shall be met by the Government and Gram Panchayats in moiety.

Gram Panchayat is competent to appoint necessary staff for facilitating the performance of its duties. A candidate for the post of a clerk in the Gram Panchayat must be of good character and should be able to read and write and maintain accounts in the language of the district in which it is situated. Gram Panchayat has full powers in respect of appointment, allotment of duties, fixation of pay, grant of leave, promotion, punishment, etc., of its staff except the Secretary. Nyaya Panchayat is competent to appoint a duly qualified clerk with the approval of the Deputy Commissioner on the time-scale of pay which shall not be higher than the scale of pay granted to a clerk in the employment of the Janapada authority. If the finances do not permit the employment of a whole-time clerk, it may appoint a part-time clerk on such pay as it may deem fit. It can also appoint a peon on the scale of pay fixed by it.

Control And Coordination

The Revenue Officers are made equally responsible for the proper working of Panchayats. The posts of Gram Sahayaks or village assistants are being sanctioned. They will work as secretaries of Panchayats and also as social education workers in the villages. In the latter role they will promote education for citizenship and cultural activities. Besides, there will be primary school teachers who will run the literary classes. They will be competent to maintain libraries and reading rooms. Gram Panchayats are administering management of radio-sets which have been loaned to them under the Rural Broadcast Scheme. As regards Public Health measures, it is compulsory for them to maintain sanitary conditions in villages and to take measures for preventing the spread of epidemics. Executive Officers of the Directorate of Social Welfare at different levels (including the Inspectorate at block level) are empowered to inspect the working of Gram Panchayats. Besides, Janapada authority and any Revenue Officer not below the rank of a Naib Tehsildar can inspect the proceedings, etc., of the Panchayats.

The present Directorate of Social Welfare, besides other duties, is responsible for the proper working of the Panchayats. The Directorate has advisory powers of recommending to the Government supersession of Panchayats for their negligence and inefficiency. After supersession of the Panchayat, the Janapada authority is required to undertake the duties of such Gram Panchayat in accordance with the provisions of Section 128 of the Act.

Pandit Shukla On Panchayats

The awareness of the State Government towards the problem of Panchayat reorganisation is revealed by the following remarks of Madhya Pradesh's veteran Chief Minister, Shri Ravi Shankar Shukla :[1] "It is obvious that this ancient administrative structure must be made more resilient and suitable to the needs of rapid changes and growth. It is essential that these Panchayat Organisations should be well-organised and well-knit systems working on the basis of willing co-operation of the entire village community, a consummation which in actual practice may present difficulties, but so very much to be desired and striven for. It would mean then that the village community be freed from the evils of electioneering, by creating a tradition of unanimity in election of best available talent to the Panchayat. Building of tradition would admittedly require herculean efforts. But with the inherent training of centuries this should not be difficult."

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[1] See article in A.I.C.C. Economic Review, Vol. VII, No. 3, Whole No. 124 dated June 1, 1955, entitled "On Village Panchayats."

Work Done By Panchayats: *Shramadan*

By the end of March 1956, the end of the First Five-Year Plan, the State had placed a target of 10,000 Village Panchayats, which has been, we understand, achieved. The Nyaya Panchayats in the State have also made considerable headway, though we have no detailed reports of their working. The Panchayat experiment in Madhya Pradesh has met with considerable success. The Community and N.E.S. Centres in Madhya Pradesh number 91, and they today cover about 25 per cent of the State's population. In these centres more than 5,000 new irrigation wells have been constructed, 2,396 renovated, 402 miles of *pucca* and 864 miles of *kuchcha* road constructed, 1,237 school buildings built and 1,373 schools opened. And in this achievement, the *Shramadan* of villagers made notable contribution. The labour of hundreds of men and women, sometimes working from sunrise to sunset, has gone into their construction. The value of their contribution, physical, material or financial, was estimated at Rs. 44 lakhs up to December 1954, at Rs. 56 lakhs up to June 1955, and Rs. 89 lakhs up to September 1955. In arousing this spirit of the villagers, the Gram Panchayats played the main role. Thus, for example, the Village Panchayat of Khirakuja, Palasner, Kadola and Charkhera of Harda Janapad in district Hoshangabad deserve special mention and have drawn State-wide praise. The Khirakuja folks constructed a Panchayat Bhavan in an area of 1,350 sq. ft. in less than six months by their own labour and contributions. Four labourers of the village, Pooran, Bal Mukand, Nagna and Dhannalal, two of them *mistries*, the third an ironsmith and the fourth a goldsmith, were specially honoured by the entire village for their hard and sacrificing work. Palasiya people constructed a two-mile road from their village to the railway station and also constructed a Panchayat Bhavan. Similar achievements lie to the credit of villages Kadola and Charkhera.[1]

In fact, a perusal of Madhya Pradesh daily and weekly language press impresses one with the reports of Panchayat activities. Panchayats meet and pass resolutions, make demands, complain against intransigence of local officials, put forward suggestions, decide about future plans, raise contributions in cash and in *Shramadan* for specific projects, etc. That the Panchayat idea has caught, and Panchayats in Madhya Pradesh today are alive and kicking organisations, is apparent. From January 11 to 17 this year,

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[1] This information is based on a report published in **Mahakoshal** (daily published from Raipur), Weekly edition, dated January 10, 1955.

TABULAR REPRESENTATION V

No. of Villages and Panchayats, etc.	Legislation passed	Amendment	VILLAGE PANCHAYATS	
			How Constituted	Powers in Village Management.
Total No. of Villages: 48,000. No. of Panchayats: N A. Villages covered by Panchayats: 8,000.	The Central Provinces and Berar Panchayats Act, 1946.	The Central Provinces and Berar Panchayats (Amendment) Act 1947. The Central Provinces and Berar Panchayats (Amendment) Act, 1948. The Central Provinces and Berar Panchayat (Amendment) Act, 1949. Madhya Pradesh Panchayats (First Amendment) Act, 1950. Madhya Pradesh Panchayat (Second Amendment) Act, 1950. Madhya Pradesh Panchayats (Third Amendment) Act, 1950. Madhya Pradesh Panchayats (Amendment) Act, 1951. Madhya Pradesh Panchayat (Amendment) Act, 1953.	Formation of Panchayats is split up into three stages. First, for every village of 1,000 and above population, second, for every village with 500 to 1,000 population; and third, with population below 500. Principle is one G.P. for every village. Elected on the basis of adult suffrage. So far Gram Panchayats have been formed by nomination under the C.P. and Berar Village Panchayats Act, 1946 in the first instance. Elections began in 1955 but were held up due to legal difficulties. Sarpanches were nominated by Govt. Now they shall be elected by the members of the Gram Panchayat. Directorate of Social Welfare advises Panchayats.	Powers of Panchayats are comprehensive. Administrative and development functions entrusted to them. They perform social and public health functions as well as certain municipal functions. There is provision for enabling Gram Panchayats to collect revenue. Periodical repairs and maintenance of roads and lanes, arrangement for the supply of water, street lighting and conservancy are carried out by Panchayats. They also undertake work connected with education, public health, communication, development of co-operative movement and other welfare activities. Compulsory duties : medical relief and first aid, registration of death, birth and marriages. Optional Duties : improvement in agriculture, live-stock, provision for storage of seeds, promotion of education. Encouragement of cottage industries, maintenance of rest houses, etc. It can exempt persons from payment of a tax, toll or fee payable under the Act. It can enact byelaws.

PANCHAYAT INSTITUTION IN MADHYA PRADESH

Sources of Revenue of Panchayats	Nyaya Panchayats		Reports on the working of Panchayats		REMARKS.
	How Constituted	Powers	Gram	Nyaya	
Gram Panchayat has certain assured sources of revenue and has powers to raise additional amounts in return for services provided by it. There is a compulsory cess on land revenue at the rate of six pies in a rupee. Compulsory taxes on buildings and non-agricultural land ranging between Rs. 2 to Rs. 80 can also be levied. A tax on profession varying from -|8|- to Rs. 5 is also levied. A licence fee for practising as broker, etc., ranging from Re. 1 to Rs. 30 can also be levied. There are optional taxes like those on vehicles, the pack animals, bazars, lighting fee, water rate. Gram Panchayat can also get loan equivalent to 5% of its revenue from a non-collapsible Village Development fund. Govt. grants Rs. 200 and Rs. 300 to Gram and Nyaya Panchayats for meeting initia expenses. Nyaya Panchayat derives income from Gram Panchayat amount recovered as fines, fees etc. No persons shall hold office in more than one Gram Panchayat. Every Gram Panchayat shall maintain a Gram Panchayat Fund. All money received by the Panchayat shall be credited to this fund.	Each Nyaya Panchayat has a circle which includes a minimum No. of three Gram Panchayats and anything between 20 to 30 non-Gram Panchayat Villages. Each constituent Gram Panchayat makes annual contribution to the funds of the Gram Panchayat. It is 1|8 of the total annual income of the Gram Panchayat. Nyaya Panchayats are nominated from among the Gram Panches and the basis for this nomination is education, social status, and reputation for integrity. Terms of office is five years.	Perform judicial functions. They can try civil suits of the value of Rs 100. But they can admit suits up to Rs. 500 with the consent of both the parties. Can try criminal cases under certain sections of the Indian Penal Code. Nyaya Panchayats are closely linked with Gram Panchayats. Both together weave a new pattern of rural life. Can impose a fine of Rs. 50. The limit can be raised to Rs. 100 in case the State Govt. so decided. Judgement of the Nyaya Panchayat is final, and there can be no appeal. No legal practitioner can appear.		Nyaya Panchayats have reduced litigation.	

the Panchayats all over the State observed a Panchayat Week whe an intensive programme of village cleaning, *Shramadan*, debat and sports was carried through. There are also reports of villag disputes reflected in the Panchayats, but the situation in this respe does not seem to be as bad as in some other States.

The State Government laid down a programme for Panchay elections last year. The elections were completed in Nagpur ar Wardha districts by June last year. But, as a Government spoke man said,[1] the programme of elections had to be withheld in oth districts as there were a number of discrepancies in the list voters. The elections were scheduled to be completed by the er of last year, but apparently some other difficulties intervened. W have, however, no fuller reports.

Financial Difficulties Of Panchayats

In the article cited above, Shri Ravi Shanker Shukla h remarked : "The fact is undeniable that the Panchayats suff from shortage of funds and efforts in the direction of effectin economy in expenditure and increasing resources of revenue ha to be made." And Shri Shukla adds : "Some sort of State a is inevitable and in this State a Village Development Fund h been created for the purpose." Another drawback of Panchaya in Madhya Pradesh has been the absence of trained personnel guide Panchayat work. To remove this defect, the State Gover ment drew up a plan for training 2,000 Gram Sahayaks. The Gover ment proposes to meet three-fourths of the pay of these Gra Sahayaks, the remaining to be met by Panchayats out of their rev nues. One Gram Sahayak looks after 3 Gram Panchayats ar works as secretary.

The State Government also propose to collect land reven through Gram Panchayats. Provisions to this effect have been ma in the Land Revenue Code passed by the State Assembly earli At present *patels* appointed on an elective basis do the job. T commission now being given to the *patels* for revenue collecti will be paid to the Panchayats. At present the State Governme propose to proceed in this regard on an experimental basis.

Gram Panchayats can be successful units in a democratic s up only when the social conscience of the rural masses is awaken An enlightened and intelligent rural population alone can re the advantages of a democratic institution like the Gram Panchay It was as a recognition of this fact that a Social Education Scher was launched in the State. Later, the Social Education and t Panchayat Departments were merged. The effects have be beneficial and Gram Panchayats are making significant cont bution to the spread of education and enlightenment.

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[1] **Hitavada**, 25.7.'55.

CHAPTER XVI

MADRAS [1]

ADRAS State, before the formation of Andhra, occupied the entire Southern Peninsula. With the merger of Banganpalle, dukkotai and Sandur, its area increased to 1,27,763 sq. miles. the east it had a coastline of about 1,250 miles on the Bay of ngal and on the south, another of about 450 miles on the Arabian , with two major ports, namely, Madras and Visakhapatnam. undulating plateau, varying in height above sea-level from about 00 to 3,000 feet, stretching northwards from the Nilgiri Hills, upies the central area of the State. On the eastern as well as western end of the State are the Eastern and the Western ats, which meet in the Nilgiris. Rivers flowing from west to st drain rather than irrigate the country, though the deltas of the davari, Krishna and Cauvery are noted for their fertility.

The composite State of Madras exhibited a wide variety of dscape and soil fertility ranging from the arid areas of Rayalma to the extremely fertile tracts of East and West Godavari tricts, Tanjore, Malabar, etc. The density of population also ried from less than 250 per square mile in Bellary, Kurnool, antpur, Cudappah, Nellore and parts of West Godavari and akhapatnam districts to 800 to 1,000 per square mile in labar, Tanjore, parts of Guntur, Krishna, Visakhapatnam and est and East Godavari, in certain tracts of this last district eeding even 1,000 per square mile.[2] The average density of population, which was 318 per square mile in 1921, has steadily increased and was 446 in 1951, an increase of about 40.3 per cent. Only 0.6 per cent of the population lives in taluks with a density below 100, 2 per cent in taluks with densities in the range 100 to 150, 6.6 per cent in the range 150 to 200, 7.6 per cent in the range 200 to 300, 15.5 per cent in the range 300 to 450, 17.1 per cent in the range 600 to 750, and 34.3 per cent in the range 750 and above. Nearly 68 per cent of the population occupies about 40 per cent of the area of the State in taluks the density of which is 450 and above. Nearly 52 per cent of the population lives in taluks the density of which is 600 and above[1].

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[1] The State of Andhra was carved out of the composite State of Madras, as it existed at the time of the Census of 1951, on October 1, 1953. The 1951 Census Report, as also the General Village, General Family and Intensive Family Surveys of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry of the Union Ministry of Labour, therefore, give data for the composite Madras State. Our study of village population, livelihood pattern, etc., in this chapter includes areas comprised in Madras State before the creation of Andhra. The Panchayat Organisation in Andhra is described in a subsequent Chapter.

[2] This wide variety is also reflected in the irrigation pattern of the State. The total irrigated area in the State in 1948-49 was 98,54,212 acres, constituting 32.2 per cent of the net sown area. Of this total area, 46,89,659 acres, or 47.6 per cent were irrigated by canals, 30,44,529 acres or 30.9 per cent by tanks, 17,84,166 acres or 18.1 per cent by wells and 3,35,948 acres or 3.4 per cent by other sources, e.g., spring channels. The percentage of irrigated area to the total net area sown was above the State average of 32.2 per cent in Visakhapatnam, East Godavari, West Godavari, Krishna, Chingleput and Tanjore districts, it being 78.3, 68.5, 87.8, 56.9, 65 and 86, respectively. It was below the average in Salem, Coimbatore, Cuddapah, Tiruchirapalli and Guntur districts, being 16.3, 30.0, 23.1, 27.9 and 20.9, respectively, and much below the average in Bellary, Kurnool and Anantpur districts, where it was 2.7, 5.2 and 9.7, respectively.

Distribution Of Population In Villages Of Different Sizes

According to the 1951 Census, Madras had a population of 5,70,16,002 of which 4,48,32,268 or 80.4 per cent was rural living in 37,096 villages. The average population per village was 1,236. The rural area comprises all revenue villages including Panchayats (major or minor). Venkateswaran says:[2] "A village is thus an administrative entity which may be uninhabited or have only one residential locality or more than one such locality. In Malabar district, the *desams* are the administrative units except in the Ernad and Ponnani taluks where only *amsams* have been treated as villages, the component *desams* being sub-units as they are of the nature of hamlets in the *amsam*." The percentage of population which lives in the rural areas is 84 in the Madras Deccan Division, 88 in the West Madras Division, and 77 in South Madras Division. As far the North Madras Division, percentage of population living in the rural area is 100 for the Agency Tracts, 87 in the Plains Upland Area and 76 in the Deltaic Area. The following table[1] gives distribution of population between villages of different sizes :

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[1] In view of these wide differences in the different areas of the State and other considerations, Shri S. Venkateswaran, Superintendent of Madras Census operations, departed from the population divisions of the earlier pre-Independence Censuses and adopted a new pattern on the principle that (i) each division must be fairly homogeneous and there must be substantial uniformity in the areas comprising the division, in regard to natural conditions, which have a bearing on population, and (ii) there must be a significant difference in this respect, between one division and another. Under this new arrangement (i) the Madras Deccan Population Division corresponds to Madras Deccan Natural Division comprising districts of Cuddapah, Kurnool, Bellary and Anantpur, all now in Andhra State; (ii) the West Madras Population Division corresponds to the West Madras Natural Division comprising Malabar, South Kanara and the Nilgiri districts; (iii) the North Madras Natural Division now corresponds to the State Population Division of Agency Tracts, Plains Upland, Plains Deltaic, almost the entire area thus comprised now in Andhra State; (iv) the South Madras Natural Division corresponds to the population division of Madras City Special Metropolitan, Northern Belt, Cauvery Delta, Southern Belt, extending from Chingleput districts in the north to Madurai, Ramnathpuram and Tirunelveli districts in the south.
Thus Natural Divisions of Madras Deccan and North Madras correspond more or less to the new Andhra State.

[2] S. Venkateswaran : Census of India 1951, Vol III, Madras and Coorg, Part I-Report, Madras, 1953: p. 51.

TABLE 62

State & Natural Division	Population per village	No. in villages per 1,000 of general population	Number per 1,000 rural population in villages with a population of				Rural population (absolute figure)
			5,000 and over	2,000 to 5,000	500 to 2,000	Under 500	
MADRAS STATE	1,236	804	166	387	386	61	4,58,32,268
Madras Deccan Division	1,245	836	62	393	489	56	42,12,297
West Madras Division	2,751	877	495	294	198	13	59,79,905
North Madras Division	980	836	111	421	384	84	1,20,70,771
South Madras Division	1,226	767	128	393	417	62	2,35,69,295

About 16.6 per cent of the villages have population of 5,000 and over, 38.7 per cent between 2,000 and 5,000, 38.6 per cent between 500 and 2,000 and only 6.1 per cent have population less than 500.

Livelihood Pattern Of General Population

The following table[2] gives an idea of the livelihood pattern of general population for Madras State and the Natural Divisions :

TABLE 63

State and Natural Division	Per 10,000 of general population belonging to livelihood class						General Population (000's omitted)
	I	II	III	IV	Total Agricultural classes	Total Non-agricultural classes	
MADRAS STATE	3,495	958	1,823	217	6,493	3,507	57,016
Madras Deccan Division	4,549	510	1,381	267	6,807	3,193	5,038
West Madras Division	797	2,273	2,015	242	5,327	4,673	6,819
North Madras Division	3,799	775	2,279	242	7,095	2,905	14,433
South Madras Division	3,762	826	1,639	192	6,419	3,581	30,726

The agricultural classes constitute 65 per cent of the population and the non-agricultural classes 35 per cent. The dependence on agriculture is greatest in the North Madras Division (71 per cent) and least in the West Madras Division (53 per cent). The table also shows that 35 per cent of the population of the State consists of persons who cultivate mostly their own lands, while 10 per cent cultivate mostly land belonging to others. The agricultural labourers account for 18 per cent of the population. The non-cultivating owners of land, agricultural rent-receivers and their dependents make up only 2 per cent of the population.

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[1] Ibid, from table on p. 58.

[2] Ibid: from table on p. 49

Livelihood Pattern Of Rural Population

The table[1] below gives the percentage distribution of the rural population by livelihood classes for the State as well as for each Division :

TABLE 64

State and Natural Division	Livelihood Class I	II	III	IV	Total Agricultural	Total Non-agricultural
MADRAS STATE ..	42	11	21	2	76	24
Madras Deccan Division ..	53	6	15	3	77	23
West Madras Division ..	9	25	23	2	59	41
North Madras Division ..	43	9	26	2	80	20
South Madras Division ..	47	10	20	2	79	21

Among the rural population, 76 per cent belong to the agricultural classes. Of these, 42 per cent cultivate their own land, and 21 per cent are agricultural labourers. Lessees and their dependents account for 11 per cent of the population while 2 per cent are rent-receivers. In West Madras Division, only 9 per cent belong to Livelihood Class I, from which it follows that there is concentration of land in the hands of comparatively few persons. Here lessees are 25 per cent and cultivating labourers 23 per cent of the rural population.

Occupational Pattern Of Agricultural Classes

The proportion of different agricultural classes in the total agricultural population of the rural areas has been illustrated by Venkateswaran in the following table[2] :

TABLE 65

State and Natural Division	Percentage of Class I	II	III	IV
MADRAS STATE ..	54	15	28	3
Madras Deccan Division ..	68	8	20	4
West Madras Division ..	15	43	38	4
North Madras Division ..	54	11	32	3
South Madras Division ..	59	13	25	2

Here cultivating owners come to 54 per cent, lessees and dependents 15 per cent and cultivating labourers 28 per cent of the agricultural population.

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[1] Ibid, p. 55.
[2] Ibid, p. 81.

The Agricultural Labourers

The estimates of agricultural labour population in Madras given by the Census enumeration, however, is very much lower than the returns of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry. The General Village Survey gave the following table[1]:

TABLE 66

Occupation and Status		Total No. of Families	Percentage to total No. of families.
Agricultural owners		6,155	23.9
Agricultural tenants		1,730	6.7
Agricultural workers :			
(a) without land	6,616)	12,447	48.4
(b) with land	5,631)		
TOTAL AGRICULTURAL FAMILIES		20,332	79.0
TOTAL NON-AGRICULTURAL FAMILIES		5,412	21.0
ALL FAMILIES		25,744	100.0

This Survey covered 84 villages all over the State, the State being divided into 7 zones, which in turn were based on the 10 zones into which the late Dr. B. V. Narayanswami Nayudu divided the State for his famous Rural Indebtedness Enquiry of 1945. These figures can, therefore, be taken to be representative and nearer the mark than the Census results.

The General Family Survey of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry reveals an even worse position. Here also 84 villages were selected in 7 zones in which the State was divided. The total population of these sample villages was 73,985, average population per village being 880.77. The villages were inhabited by 15,712 families, of which 3,299 or 21 per cent were agricultural owners' families, 896 or 5.7 per cent tenants, 8,332 or 53.03 per cent agricultural workers and 3,045 or 19.38 per cent non-agriculturists. 140 families or 0.9 per cent had no specific stable occupation. The zonal variations in the occupational structure by the percentage distribution of families among the main categories would be found in the following table[2]:

TABLE 67

Zone	Percentage to total families			
	Agricultural Landowners	Agricultural Tenants	Agricultural Workers	Non-Agri-culturists
I	23.69	4.45	52.41	18.69
II	21.2	4.1	58.1	15.6
III	26.44	3.11	56.00	14.15
IV	20.57	3.24	56.13	18.78
V	8.1	15.6	44.5	35.0
VI	39.4	9.1	42.8	8.4
VII	27.9	5.5	55.1	10.6

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[1] Agricultural Wages in India, Vol. I, Op. cit., p. 110.

[2] Rural Manpower and Occupational Structure, Op. cit., p. 107.

Thus, in the sample villages, agricultural workers occupied an important place, their families forming more than 50 per cent of the total. Of these, 4,453, or 28.3 per cent of the total had land. There were 3,255 families, or 20.7 per cent, which owned land, while 1,098 or 7 per cent held land on lease and 100 or 6.2 per cent were granted land rent-free. In zones II, III, IV and VI1 agricultural labourers' families were above 55 per cent.

Caste Composition

The caste composition of the surveyed villages, however, reveals a pattern different from other States. Of the 15,712 families, 7,261 or 46.21 were Christians, Muslims or of "miscellaneous" castes. The backward classes accounted for 3,340 or 21.3 per cent, the scheduled castes for 3,241 or 20.6 per cent, Vaishyas for 1,307 or 8.3 per cent, Kshatriyas for 315 or 2 per cent, Brahmins for 230 or 1.5 per cent and tribal and aboriginal communities for 12 or 0.1 per cent. Agricultural owners belonged mostly to backward classes and other castes. Of the 3,299 agricultural owners' families, 1,869 or 56.6 per cent were of 'other' castes, 712 or 21.6 per cent belonged to backward classes, 152 or 4.6 per cent to scheduled castes, 357 or 10.8 per cent to Vaishyas, 144 or 4.4 per cent to Kshatriyas and 64 or 1.9 per cent to Brahmins. Of the 896 tenant families, about 22 per cent belonged to backward classes, 8.8 per cent to scheduled castes and the remainder to other castes and communities. Of the total 8,332 families of agricultural workers, 2,837 or 34.05 per cent were scheduled caste families and 17.05 per cent belonged to backward classes.

Size Of Holdings

The preponderance of the agricultural labourer population in Madras State is thus clear. They are followed by the cultivating owners. The great majority of the holdings, however, are uneconomic. The following table[1] gives the distribution of 1,000 agricultural holdings by size of holdings in Madras State and the Natural Divisions :

TABLE 68

State and Natural Division	Less than 1 acre	1 to 3 acres	3 to 5 acres	5 to 10 acres	10 to 12 acres	Above 25 acres
MADRAS STATE ..	185	318	170	162	115	50
Madras Deccan Division ..	144	220	136	194	231	75
West Madras Division ..	214	391	161	155	56	23
North Madras Division ..	201	294	165	145	118	77
South Madras Division ..	188	321	178	167	108	38

The table shows that nearly 50 per cent of the holdings were below 3 acres and about 67 per cent below 5 acres. An official enquiry found the position in village Vandalur near Vandalur Railway Station in Chingleput Taluk of Chingleput district to be much worse. "Nearly 56 per cent of the holdings were below two acres ....Nearly 89.2 per cent of the holdings were below 5 acres,......only 6.8 per cent of the total (population of the village —*author)* possessed holdings between 5 to 10 acres, while 4.1 per cent of the total had holdings of the size of 10 acres and above."[1] The Intensive Family Survey of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry furnishes a very informative table on the size of holdings in Madras State. The Survey was conducted in 84 villages of the State which was divided into 7 zones. The following table[2] gives the percentage distribution of holdings according to number and area in different zones :

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[1] Venkateswaran, Op. cit., compiled from table on p. 97.

TABLE 69

Zones	Under 1 acre		1 acre to below 2.5		2.5 acres to below 5		5 acres to below 10		10 acres and above		Average size acres
	No.	Area	No.	Area	No.	Area	No.	Area	No.	Area	
I ..	18.2	1.8	29.3	8.9	21.8	14.7	16.4	21.7	14.3	52.9	5.1
II ..	21.4	3.0	34.5	13.9	23.4	20.2	12.5	21.1	8.2	41.8	4.0
III ..	14.3	0.8	19.7	3.5	16.4	6.8	21.9	17.0	27.7	71.9	8.7
IV ..	10.4	1.4	33.2	12.3	30.0	23.6	17.8	27.0	8.6	35.7	4.4
V ..	49.2	10.4	26.7	18.8	13.0	21.2	8.2	24.6	2.9	25.0	2.1
VI ..	15.1	1.4	22.6	6.6	29.6	19.2	18.8	23.1	13.9	49.7	5.3
VII ..	21.4	1.8	22.9	8.0	18.3	13.8	25.2	39.7	12.2	36.7	4.5
State ..	22.2	2.5	29.8	10.5	22.5	17.4	15.1	22.5	10.4	47.0	4.5

The number of holdings below 1 acre is seen to be 22 per cent, whereas about 75 per cent are below 5 acres. 52 per cent of the holdings were below 2.5 acres. Only 10.4 per cent were of the size of 10 acres and above, and they covered 47 per cent of the area. 52 per cent holdings below 2.5 acres covered only 13 per cent of the area. Of the holdings below 1 acre, 68 per cent belonged to agricultural labour families.

The Village Panchayat Act Of 1920

As we have said earlier,[3] the most considerable efforts to revive local village institutions were made by the British in Madras in the latter half of the last century.[4] A Village Panchayat Act was, however, put on the Statute Book for the first time in 1920. In December 1921, the late N. Gopalaswamy Iyenger, who has been called the Father of Panchayats in Madras, was made the Registrar-General of Panchayats. With keen paternal interest he guided the development of Panchayats in Madras. The progress achieved, however, was far from satisfactory. By 1924-25, for example, only 579 Panchayats had been formed. By 1931-32, 4,474 Panchayats had been constituted. Their number reached 5,812 in 1937-38, 6,678 in 1942-43 and 7,237 in 1946. Referring to this period of Panchayat development in Madras, a State Government publication makes the following remarks :[1] "Under the (1920) Act, the Panchayats had no untramelled existence. They were left with little or no initiative and lack of funds imposed a serious hardship. The District Board and its President as well as the Inspector of Local Boards had powers to interfere even in the day-to-day administration of Village Panchayats, not to speak of the ease with which they could interfere in more important matters. Their budgets and administration reports, for example, had to be submitted to the District Boards. The President of the District Board was also empowered to take action against Presidents of Panchayats. All proposals of taxation made by Panchayats had to be approved by the District Boards. The Inspector of Local Boards also had similar authority and this dual control practically smothered Village Panchayats."

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[1] Report on an Enquiry into the Conditions of Agricultural Workers in Village Vandalur in Madras State, Govt. of India, Ministry of Labour, Delhi, 1950; p. 13.

[2] Report on Intensive Survey of Agricultural Labour, Vol. IV-South India, Govt. of India, Ministry of Labour, Delhi, 1955; p. 14.

[3] Book I, Chapter IX : "Panchayats in the National Movement."

[4] For a succinct account of these attempts, the reader is referred to **A Study of Panchayats in Madras** by K. Jayaraman, Indian Society of Agricultural Economics, Bombay, 1947 (pp. 158). Jayaraman's study, published in 1947 does not obviously cover the developments of the Panchayat Institution in Madras following the 1950 Madras Village Panchayat Act. That does not, however, belittle the importance of Jayaraman's work, which we would strongly commend to all students of Panchayats in Madras, or for the matter of that, for whole India. The author has hardly come across any other study of like value and research for any other State of India.

Under the 1920 Act, the constitution of Panchayats was purely voluntary.In the initial years, therefore, an infinitesimal number of villages came forward with a desire to form Panchayats. Further, there was hardly any staff to encourage the movement. The Act introduced the system of adult suffrage by enfranchising all men over 25 years of age, and provided for the election of all members of the Panchayats, whose strength varied from 7 to 15. The Act did not impose any particular duty on Panchayats. Sections 15 to 20 of the Act referred to numerous functions, such as construction and maintenance of village roads, culverts, drains, etc., the provision of water, lighting, education, latrines and other sanitary arrangements, opening and maintenance of libraries, control of cart-sheds ponds, fairs and festivals, threshing floors, etc., extension of village site, vaccination, registration of births and deaths, and any other duty or work authorised or transacted by the Government, Distric or Taluk Boards, Collector or any private person or persons. While such a large number of functions were enumerated, no adequate provision was made to provide funds for the Panchayats. Under the Village Panchayats Act of 1920, no tax was compulsory, but Panchayats were permitted to raise taxes suitable to the locality. The Panchayat resources were : (i) funds raised by taxation under Section 25 of the Act; (ii) transferred sources and grants from the Government and Local Boards; and (iii) customary communal income and contributions from private individuals.

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[1] Panchayat Raj, Issued by the Director of Information and Publicity. Governmen of Madras.

Sources Of Income Under The 1920 Act

Jayaraman says that the notable sources of income of Panchayats were the following taxes : (1) Marriage fees; (2) *Mahimai*, i.e., taxes on carts which carry away grain, etc., from the village; (3) Taxes on artisans, on oil-mills, and on looms; (4) Market fees; (5) Taxes on temporary stalls set up during the harvest season near threshing floors for the sale of betels, arecanuts, sugar-cane and confectionary. During 1925-26, "324 orders sanctioning one tax or another were in force in 198 Panchayat areas." This list of taxes should not, however, give any false estimate of Panchayat income. Under the Act, and the rules made thereunder, the Panchayat President could collect taxes only so long as they were paid without demur. Coercion could be employed only by the village headman when approached by the Panchayat President. The President, naturally enough, was never too eager for approaching the headman for use of coercion; and the headman on his part, put off the evil day until threatened by his superiors. The poor revenues of the Major Panchayats of the State would be apparent from the following table[1], which gives receipts and expenditures from 1936-37 to 1944-45 :

TABLE 70

RECEIPTS (IN LAKHS OF RUPEES)

	1936-37	1938-39	1940-41	1942-43	1944-45
1. Land Cess	—	1.53	1.72	1.74	1.60
2. House Tax.	15.29	14.55	17.45	18.44	23.35
3. Profession Tax	1.06	1.25	2.12	2.11	2.40
4. Fees, Fines and Miscellaneous Revenues	0.50	0.42	0.72	0.99	1.97
5. Conservancy	1.08	1.21	1.54	2.11	3.39
6. Fishery Rents	0.17	0.26	0.25	0.25	0.42
7. Markets, Cart-Stands and Slaughter Houses	4.47	5.50	6.11	6.52	8.50
8. Avenues	0.15	0.20	0.19	0.22	0.50
9. Other Items—Ordinary and Capital (excluding deposits and advances)	7.07	7.97	7.48	7.53	14.65
Total ..	29.79	32.89	37.58	89.91	56.78

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[1] K. Jayaraman : **A Study of Panchayats in Madras**, Op. cit., pp. 37-38. Those with normal annual incomes of less than Rs. 3,000 were Minor Panchayats; those with higher incomes were called Major Panchayats.

EXPENDITURE (IN LAKHS OF RUPEES)

	1936-37	1938-39	1940-41	1942-43	1944-45
1. Sanitation	7.52	7.32	9.02	11.31	19.13
2. Lighting	6.38	7.36	7.96	6.64	7.20
3. Roads	2.26	2.71	3.19	3.23	4.75
4. Establishment (General and Collection)	3.88	3.73	4.00	4.57	7.60
5. Other Items—Ordinary and Capital (excluding deposits and advances)	8.04	11.19	12.05	10.20	15.40
Total ..	28.08	32.31	36.22	35.95	54.08

Note :—The statement does not include deposits and advances as well as opening and closing balances. The realization of land cess for 1936-37 is not readily available.

Village Panchayats In Madras 1930-1946

After 1930, however, there was a further deterioration in the working of Madras Panchayats. About 1928, the late Shri N. Gopalaswamy Iyenger drafted another Bill to remove the defects in Panchayat working and place them in a stronger statutory position. This Bill, however, was pigeon-holed by the then British rulers. On the other hand, the 1920 Village Panchayat Act was repealed, and Panchayats were brought within the ambit of the Madras Local Boards Act. Adult franchise was abolished and a restricted one introduced. The post of Registrar-General of Panchayats was abolished, and the direct touch of the Provincial Government with these infant institutions was thus done away with. The Inspectors of Local Boards were now supposed to supervise the Panchayats, but this work was hardly ever seriously undertaken. Jayaraman rightly remarks that as a result of these reforms "instead of the ancient village institutions being revived, Panchayats became a miniature copy of the smallest unit of democratic administration in the West."[1]

When, during 1937-39, a Congress Ministry was installed in power under the Government of India Act of 1935, Shri T. Prakasam, then Revenue Minister, got a Panchayat Bill drafted, giving wide powers to Panchayats, including the power to manage forests and irrigation works and to try petty civil and criminal cases. Following the outbreak of the Second World War, however, the popular Ministry resigned and the draft Bill was shelved. The Advisers' Government, which now took office, published a Bill in 1941 for reorganising Panchayats in Madras. Among other things it suggested : (1) Introduction of ex-officio membership of village headman who was also to be eligible for Presidentship; (2) Creation of whole-time executive officers for Major Panchayats and appointment of village *Karnams* as honorary executive officers for Minor Panchayats; (3) Supervision and control of Panchayats by the

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[1] Ibid, p. 31.

District Collector, the Revenue Board being the co-ordinating body over the Collectors; (4) Compulsory levy of house tax and an additional levy of three pies of land cess; and (5) Provision for the appointment of a nominated Panchayat. It would be clear from the above that the object of the Advisers was to take away whatever autonomy existed for the Panchayats and make them Government agencies in the villages. The Bill aroused opposition all over Madras. It was accordingly referred to an Advisory Committee which suggested certain changes. The final upshot, however, of the tortuous process was that the Madras Local Boards Act of 1920 was amended in 1943 by which whole-time Executive Officers were appointed to all Major Panchayats and such of the Minor ones as notified by the Government. The situation continued unsatisfactory, and in April 1946, the Advisers' Government again published a draft Bill for Panchayat reorganisation on the lines of the 1941 Bill. A popular Ministry was, however, soon after installed in office and in 1947 it undertook a comprehensive study of the whole question, and in 1950, the Madras Village Panchayat Act was placed on the Statute Book.

The Madras Village Panchayat Act, 1950

The object of the 1950 Act is to develop Village Panchayats as autonomous units of local administration, investing them with large powers in all matters relating to village life and economy, with the minimum of outside control consistent with efficiency in working. The Act was brought into force from April 1, 1951.

Under the Act, every village or hamlet with a population of 500 and above is to have a Panchayat. Villages with a population of less than 500 are included within the jurisdiction of an adjoining Panchayat or grouped with other contiguous villages and a single Panchayat formed for the group. As a matter of administrative convenience, however, the Government decided that the territorial unit for purposes of constitution of Panchayats may be one with a population of not less than 1,000 for the present. The Panchayats constituted under the 1920 Act retained their old jurisdiction and reconstituted. In case a Panchayat had more than 1,000 population, it was directed that they be split up. In case, however, the concerned village population decided to continue as before, they were permitted.

Constitution Of Panchayats

Membership of a Panchayat ranges from 5 to 15, in accordance with the population. Scheduled castes have been given reservation of seats till 1960. The term of office of members and President is

3 years. The election is based on adult franchise and the voters are the same as those in the electoral list for the General Elections. The President is elected directly by the entire electorate. The Vice-President is selected from among the members of the Panchayat. Elections to Panchayats with a population estimated at not less than 5,000 and with an estimated annual income of not less than Rs. 10,000 (known as Class I Panchayats) are held by secret ballot, and elections to other Panchayats (known as Class II Panchayats) by show of hands. A Class I Panchayat has to be divided into not less than 5 wards and a Class II Panchayat into two wards if it has a population not exceeding 1,000, and into not more than 5 wards if the population exceeds 1,000.

Panchayat Functions

The Panchayats have certain obligatory as well as discretionary functions within the limits of their funds. The obligatory functions include the construction, repair and maintenance of public roads, the lighting of streets and public places, construction of drains, cleaning of streets, removal of rubbish, provision of latrines whether public or private, provision of protected water supply, sinking and repairing of wells, ponds or tanks, preventive and remedial public health measures.

Certain additional powers have also been assigned to Panchayats. Thus, the work of village courts and Panchayat courts under the Madras Village Courts Act, 1888, have now devolved on Panchayats within their respective areas, civil jurisdiction being increased to Rs. 100. Panchayats which are not in the headquarters of Registration Offices can now be invested with powers of a Sub-Registrar in respect of documents that are exempted from stamp duty and registration fees and documents of an ephemeral nature in respect of property not exceeding Rs. 100 in value. Very few Panchayats, if any, have thus far been vested with this power.

Panchayats have also been authorised to take up repairs to minor irrigation works. The Panchayats may levy an acreage fee for this purpose. Management of all unreserved forests, grazing grounds, threshing floors, topes and other communal porambokes in the village has also been transferred to the Panchayats. All *gramapodu* or *sammdayam* rights (that is communal income) enjoyed by the village community have been transferred to Panchayats.

The discretionary functions are planting and preservation of trees on road margins, opening and maintenance of public schools, reading rooms, etc., public markets, car-stands, slaughter houses, dispensaries, maternity and child welfare centres, control of fairs and festivals, improvement of agriculture and agricultural stock and organising agricultural shows.

Sources Of Revenue

The Panchayats are entitled to 6 pies for each rupee of land cess realised in the village on the annual rent value of all occupied lands, and the duty levied on transfers of property. Panchayats have, under the 1950 Act, to compulsorily levy a tax on houses (huts exempted), a profession tax and a vehicle tax. These are subject to a maximum and minimum to be decided by the Government. At their own discretion, and subject to the sanction of the Inspector of Local Boards, Panchayats can also levy certain other specified taxes and fees suitable and convenient to the village. The Act also provides for the setting apart every year of a sum not less than 12½ per cent of the total land revenue (including water cess) of the State for distribution as grants to Class II Panchayats on the basis of population. Owing to financial stringency, however, this has not yet been given effect to.

The other sources of Panchayat revenue consist of income from levy of fees on markets and cart-stands and other remunerative enterprises, and licence fees on dangerous and offensive trades. Further, ex-gratia grants are given by the Government to Panchayats for improvement of village communications and maintenance of elementary schools generally and for public health purposes in a few cases. The grants for village communications are subject to the condition that they are utilised on capital works and that the Panchayat concerned contributes an amount equal to the grant drawn. The grants for maintenance of elementary schools fall under three heads, viz., (a) teaching grant, (b) maintenance grant, and (c) equipment grant. The Panchayats are treated on a par with aided schools under private management for purposes of these grants. The public health grants are mainly for anti-malarial and anti-filarial operations, maternity and child welfare schemes and rural water supply.

Panchayat revenues are spent upon obligatory and discretionary functions enumerated above, pay and allowances, election expenses, towards the expenses of any public exhibition or ceremony or entertainment in the village, any charitable fund and poor relief, and extraordinary charges.

The Panchayats have full discretion to incur expenditure on these items. The Government has, however, specified by suitable rules the minimum limits of expenditure that should be incurred by Panchayats in respect of communications and water supply, and the maximum limit of expenditure in respect of lighting and public health.[1]

Control And Coordination

Executive officers are appointed to Class I Panchayats where the Presidents cannot devote adequate attention to running the administration, and to such of Class II Panchayats as are not administered properly, provided always that the finances of the Panchayat can bear the expenditure. The Executive Officer is charged with the duty of carrying on the day-to-day administration and of putting into effect the resolutions passed by the Panchayats. He is under the disciplinary control of the Inspector of Municipal Councils and Local Boards. Roughly, 300 Panchayats have thus far been notified for appointment of Executive Officers. The strength of clerical and other staff of a Panchayat is fixed by the Inspector (or his delegate, the Regional Inspector), according to the income and importance of the Panchayat. The appointments to sanctioned posts are made by the executive authority, i.e., Executive Officers in the case of notified Panchayats, and the Presidents in other cases.

It would thus be clear from the above that in Government supervision over Village Panchayats, the Inspector of Municipal Councils and Local Boards, assisted by Regional Inspectors and District and Deputy Panchayat Officers play the leading role.[2] District Boards do not have any control over Panchayats; they, however, continue to administer non-Panchayat areas until Panchayats are constituted there.

As for the relation between a Panchayat and the regular administrative and revenue officers of the village, and the co-ordination of educational, public health and other activities of the Panchayats with the corresponding departments of the Government, Madras seems to have developed an elaborate system which may be usefully followed in some detail. The various functions and powers exercised by the Government Departments in respect of the activities of Panchayats are detailed below :

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[1] The election expenses include the cost of preparation and revision of the electoral roll and conduct of elections. These expenses are determined by the Government. As for expenses for any public exhibition or ceremony or entertainment in the village, or for poor relief, the sanction of the Inspector of Municipal Councils and Local Boards is necessary. He has delegated these powers to District Panchayat Officers and Regional Inspectors. The audit of Class I Panchayats is conducted annually by the Local Fund Audit Staff, while that of Class II Panchayats by the District Panchayat Officers and their deputies. No fee is charged for such audit. The Examiner of Local Fund Accounts is the authority competent to issue surcharge orders in respect of Class I Panchayats, and the Regional Inspector can do so for Class II Panchayats.

[2] The Inspector is authorised to remove a President or Vice-President from office for abuse of powers vested in him, defalcation or any such serious misdemeanour or wilful omission or refusal to discharge his functions under the Act and rules. Similarly, he may remove members for misconduct in the discharge of their duties. The Inspector can also supersede or dissolve a Panchayat which is not competent to perform or persistently defaults in performing the duties imposed by law, or exceeds or abuses its powers. During the period of supersession or dissolution, all except the President will go out of office. The President will have to carry on the Panchayat administration until the Panchayat is reconstituted after holding elections. In case there is no President of the Panchayat on the date of its supersession or dissolution, a Special Officer is appointed to carry on Panchayat work.

I. REVENUE DEPARTMENT

1. THE BOARD OF REVENUE :

(1) Ordering the transfer to a Panchayat, with its consent the management of any institution or the execution or maintenance of any work, or the exercise of any power or the discharge of any duty within or without the village.

(2) Controlling the assessment by Collector of the rent payable by the Panchayat for the unreserved forests vested in them.

(3) Revising the orders passed by the Revenue Divisional Officer or the Collector regarding withdrawal of unreserved forest from the control of the Panchayat.

(4) Making over to Panchayat the management and superintendence of any charitable endowments and likewise resuming such endowments.

2. THE COLLECTOR :

(1) Directing or providing for the execution of any work or the doing of any act which the Panchayat or executive authority is empowered to do, in any emergency, for the safety of the public.

(2) Power to cancel any licence granted by the Panchayat for any projection, erection or structure in or over any public road vested in it and power to accord previous sanction to the issue of licences by the Panchayats in certain cases.

(3) Power to suspend or cancel any resolution passed, order issued, or licence or permission granted and power to prohibit the doing of any action which is about to be done or is being done, if the execution of such resolution or order, etc., is likely to cause danger to human life, health or safety or is likely to lead to a riot or an affray.

(4) Power to transfer to the Panchayat with its consent the management of any institution, or the execution or maintenance of any work or the exercise of any power or the discharge of any duty whether within or without the village.

(5) Power to exclude from the operation of the Madras Village Panchayats Act certain communal porambokes, at the disposal of Government.

(6) Power to permit the village headman to collect taxes on behalf of Panchayats and to fix the remuneration therefor.

(7) Power to decide whether any damage to the sluices,

calingulas, channels, head-works, etc., connected with irrigation works is the result of any misfeasance or non-feasance on the par of the Panchayat.

(8) Power to sanction the acquisition of immovable property by Panchayats otherwise than under the Land Acquisition Act.

(9) Power to approve the payment by the Panchayat, in acquiring immovable property of any amount in excess of the valuation fixed by the Revenue Department or the officers of the Highways Department, as the case may be.

(10) Powers to sanction the transfer (except by way of lease of any immovable property belonging to the Panchayat or the creation of a charge on such property.

(11) Power to decide on appeals relating to encroachment on porambokes the use of which is regulated by Panchayats as t whether or not an encroachment is objectionable.

3. THE REVENUE DIVISIONAL OFFICER :

(1) Power to withdraw from the Panchayat temporarily th management of any unreserved forest, if the Panchayat is no administering it properly.

(2) Power to transfer to the Panchayat with its consent, th management of any institution, or the execution or maintenanc of any work, or the exercise of any power or the discharge of an duty, whether within or without the village.

(3) Power to sanction cutting or selling of (i) live trees o road margins, which are considered as dangerous to traffic or t life or health; and (ii) live trees on the bunds of small tanks whic serve as sources of supply of drinking water, if the leaves of suc trees fall into the tanks and render them unfit for drinking purpose

(4) Power to decide appeals against the order of the Electic Officer rejecting the nomination of any candidate in elections conducted under Part I rules (i.e., by secret ballot).

4. VILLAGE OFFICERS : (Headman and *Karnam*)

(1) Furnishing to the executive authority information o specific matters pertaining to the village as prescribed in the rul issued by the Government.

(2) Collection of taxes (by village headman only) due to th Panchayat and receiving the remuneration therefor as determin by the Collector.

II. HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT

(1) The officers of the Highways Department, viz., Assista Engineer (Highways), Divisional Engineer (Highways) and Superintending Engineer (Highways) have power to accord technic

sanction to estimates for Panchayat works upto certain specified limits.

(2) The Divisional Engineer (Highways) has power to approve immovable property (estimated to cost above Rs. 1,000) proposed for acquisition by Panchayats as suitable for the purpose for which it is intended.

(3) The Divisional Engineer (Highways) or the Assistant Engineer (Highways), acting under the orders of the Divisional Engineer (Highways), has to certify regarding the structural stability of any building proposed to be acquired by the Panchayat and he has also to assess the value of the building.

III. PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

(1) The Director of Public Health should be consulted by the Inspector of Municipal Councils and Local Boards in fixing or altering the number, designation and grades of and the salaries, fees and allowances payable to the public health establishment of Panchayats.

(2) The District Health Officer may be authorised by the Inspector of Municipal Councils and Local Boards in case there is no Panchayat Health Officer, to exercise specified functions of the executive authority of the Panchayat.

(3) The District Health Officer has power to issue directions to the Panchayats, to maintain the communal porambokes the use of which is regulated by them, in a sanitary condition.

IV. EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

(1) Power to supervise elementary schools managed by Panchayats.

(2) Power to approve the acquisition of immovable property exceeding Rs. 1,000 in value if it is intended for educational purposes.

V. VETERINARY DEPARTMENT

Where a Panchayat has not employed a qualified Veterinary Assistant Surgeon of its own, it can requisition the services of the Government Veterinary Assistant Surgeon to examine the carcasses of animals slaughtered and to certify as to their fitness for human consumption.

Panchayats In Madras: An Evaluation Of Their Work

Referring to the reorganisation of Panchayats under the Madras Village Panchayats Act of 1950, the State Minister for Local Administration, Shri S. S. Ramaswami Padayachi has said[1]: "The old policy of having Village Panchayats as minor and unimportant appendages to the District Boards, with very little powers to do things for themselves, and far too little money to accomplish much, was completely revised. The new Act has provided the minimum of outside control over Panchayats, consistent with efficiency and integrity in working. The enthusiasm of the villagers for managing their local affairs has been directed through proper channels and the results are quite encouraging. There has been a growing demand from the rural population for the constitution of more Panchayats, and the work of forming Panchayats, particularly in the Community Project and National Extension Service areas, is now proceeding at a good space."

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[1] See **Madras Information** (published monthly by the Director of Information and Publicity, Madras), Annual Number, January, 1955; p. 38.

We have come across other opinions, however, which are not so enthusiastic about Panchayat functioning in the State. Thus, for example, Shri M. Manickam, Secretary, Madras Provincial Union of Local Boards, in his reply to the Questionnaire of the Congress Village Panchayat Committee, said[1] : "The Panchayat has no hand except to pass a resolution which the Executive Officer may carry into effect if it pleases him. Though the members and Presidents of the Panchayats are elected by the people, they cannot question the Executive Officer or his staff for any mistakes or dereliction of duty. Though the Executive Officer and staff are paid from the Panchayat funds, they are answerable to an outside authority, viz., Panchayat Officer. The Panchayat and Revenue Officers of the village work completely apart. Education, Public Health and other activities are supervised by the Government. Panchayats are not being treated well." The Report of the Congress Village Panchayat Committee has also remarked: [2] "The experience of the association of Executive Officers or experts of the Government in Madras has been none too happy. As an official of the Madras Government said at the Simla Conference, '*Panchayats in Madras have tended to become engines of oppression.*' "

Unfortunately, we have no detailed reports on the working of Panchayats in Madras,[3] and so it is not possible for us to correctly evaluate the progress and achievements. By

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[1] **Report of the Congress Village Panchayat Committee,** Op. cit.; Applendix E, p. Lxxvii. Shri Manickam further remarks : "Provisions in the Act make it impossible for the elected representatives to function efficiently for the good of the people. They are contrary to every democratic principle. In fact, it allows the Executive Authority and Staff to do anything behind the back of the Board which the Panchayat cannot find out. It is the Government which is running the administration of the Panchayats through the Executive Officer. Presidents of the Panchayat should have full powers of control over staff and management. This would reduce the friction between the Executive Officer and the Panchayat."

[2] Ibid, p. 32.

[3] Shri P. Thirumma Reddi, former Minister for Local Administration in Andhra writing in **Local Government** (published quarterly from Mauslipatam, by the Federation of All-India Local Authorities), says : "Unfortunately in this State (i.e. Andhra) we have yet no detailed reports on the working of Panchayats. Our information is that no such reports have been forthcoming even in the composite State." **(Vol. 1, No. 2, November 1954, p. 41).**

1954, there were about 4,596 Panchayats in Madras State (283 Class I Panchayats and 4,313 Class II Panchayats), covering nearly 7,000 out of 19,486 villages of the State. According to Shri S. S. Ramaswami Padayachi,[1] a sum of Rs. 15 lakhs will be set apart for development of Panchayats during the Second Plan period (1956-61). It is proposed to constitute at least 6,000 new Panchayats during the Plan period. "The scheme also provides for better superintendence and inspection of Panchayats by strengthening the existing staff and for the training of members and Presidents of Panchayats by conducting classes at taluk headquarters and arranging for talks by the District officers, like the District Health Officer, District Education Officer, Deputy Registrar of Co-operative Societies and the Divisional Engineer (Highways)".

People's Contribution Not Encouraging

We feel that the sum set apart (Rs. 15 lakhs) for development of Panchayats during the entire Second Plan period is not at all sufficient. We are confident that, given proper help and encouragement, and provided they have the incentive for developing local initiative, the villagers can and will show remarkable results. Thus, for example, Shri N. E. S. Raghavachari, I.C.S., Director of Community Development in Madras, says : [2] "People are prepared to meet their part of the cost for the provision of more and more amenities in villages. For instance, villagers have formed earth-roads entirely at their own cost, and then requested the Government to provide the culverts and bridges on these. Similarly, people are anxious that every village should be provided with adequate drinking water supply and are prepared to meet part of the cost of such schemes. Community recreation centres have been set up in several villages. The entire cost of the building for these centres is usually met by the people of the locality, the Government making a small grant towards the cost of Radio and equipment. For school buildings, the people have spent much more than the Government's contribution. Wherever Government land is not available for formation of roads or for the construction of buildings, wells, etc., people have come forward with generous gifts of land. It is estimated that the total value of the people's contribution on all these items amounts to over Rs. 45 lakhs upto the end of March 1955."

This estimate of people's contribution, the only one we have come across for Madras State, commendable as it is, is much below what we find in, for example, Uttar Pradesh. This, however, underlines the fact that given proper guidance and encouragement, the Panchayats can become active instruments for rural uplift. We are gratified to note that there is a keen awareness of this at high administrative levels. To quote Shri Raghavachari again: [1] "There should be an effective people's organisation for every village. Wherever Panchayats have been formed and are fully representative of all the interests in a village, they are utilised for development activities. The Panchayats have been advised to form development committees to which representative non-members could be co-opted. Wherever there are no statutory Panchayats, informal development Panchayats have been formed in all villages covered by the programme. It is these organisations which draw up the programme for the village and which mobilise the people's contribution towards works. The works are also executed by these organisations."

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[1] Madras Information, Annual Number, 1956; p. 82.

[2] Madras Information, Vol. IX, No. 8 of August, 1955, p. 11.

Proposals For Future Reorganisation

The Government of Madras has under consideration certain proposals for giving greater incentive to the development of Panchayats in the State and to remove the defects observed in the working of the 1950 Act. It is suggested that the constitution of Panchayats be made optional instead of being compulsory. The territorial unit may be raised from 500, as at present, to 1,000 (Government have already accepted this suggestion as a working principle). Class I Panchayats and Class II Panchayats which have a population of 2,000 and above alone need be divided into wards, and may have elections on the secret ballot system; other Class II Panchayats with a population of less than 2,000 need have no wards and elections here may be by show of hands. The President should be elected by the elected members of the Panchayats, and not by the entire electorate as at present. The period of supersession of bad Panchayats is sought to be extended to more than one year. The powers of the Village Panchayat regarding automatic vesting of communal property, as also with regard to *Kudimaramat* (repair of minor irrigation works), as also over porambokes are proposed to be curtailed or taken away. The reason suggested is local troubles and factions in the village by the one-sided use of these powers by the dominant faction in the village body. The compulsory levy of professional tax should be made optional. The provisions relating to vehicles tax may be deleted altogether. The 12½ per cent land revenue grant to Class II Panchayats should be reduced to 10 per cent. Actual vesting of water sources in the Panchayat is to be taken away. Only such water sources as are not private property be controlled by the Panchayat for proper maintenance. The Madras High Court having declared Section 81 of the M.V.P. Act (relating to abolition of private markets) *ultra vires* of the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution, the Act is to be suitably modified. The powers of the Executive Officer for the Registration of documents, even of an ephemeral nature, are to be taken away. The suggestions made by the Planning Commission for enlarging the functions of Panchayats so as to make them development agencies for implementing the Five-Year Plan are being considered by the Government. The Government has certain other proposals under consideration relating to decentralisation of District Boards by constituting local boards for taluks.

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[1] Ibid, p. 11.

Another very important proposal relates to the separation of judicial powers from the existing Panchayats and constituting separate Nyaya Panchayats. Under Section 130 of the M.V.P. Act, 1950, Panchayats in Madras are deemed to be Panchayat Courts under the Madras Village Courts Act of 1888, for the respective areas. The entire Panchayat today functions as the Panchayat Court. There have been complaints that Village Panchayats are not functioning satisfactorily as Panchayat Courts and that group differences in the village have been reflected there. They also do not seem to have achieved any notable success in reducing litigation. It is, therefore, considered desirable that Panchayats confine themselves to municipal and other functions and judicial functions are entrusted to separate village courts as before.

TABULAR REPRESENTATION VI

No. of Villages and Panchayats etc.	Legislation passed	Amendment	Village Panchayats	
			How Constituted	Powers in Village Management
Total No. of Villages: 19,486 No. of Villages covered by Panchayats: 7,000	Madras Village Courts Act, 1888. Madras Village Panchayats Act, 1950.	Amended by Madras Act XII of 1951 and Madras Act XXIV of 1951.	Election on adult suffrage basis. Membership ranges from 5 to 15. Secret ballot in case of a population of about 5,000. A separate Dept. The Inspector of Municipal Councils and Local Boards and Regional Inspectors supervise the administration. Three grades of Panchayats on income basis. One for each group of 1,000 population. President elected by the entire electorate. Reservation of seats for scheduled castes.	**Obligatory Functions**: Maintenance of roads, lighting sanitation, water supply sinking and repairing of wells, remedial public health measures. Administration of civil and criminal Justice, Registration of documents; education, communications and other Welfare works. To regulate the use of communal lands.

PANCHAYATS INSTITUTION IN MADRAS

Sources of Revenue of Panchayats	Nyaya Panchayats		Report on the working of Panchayats		REMARKS
	How Constituted	Powers in relation to Village Panchayat	Gram	Nyaya	
Main source is land cess of 6 pies per rupee on the annual rent value of all occupied lands and duty levied on transfer of property under 1950 Act. A tax on profession, vehicles and houses to be compulsorily levied. Levy of fees on markets, State grants. 12½% of land revenue set apart for this purpose. Licence fee on dangerous and offensive trades. Grants of three kinds : (1) teaching grant, (2) maintenance grant, and (3) equipment grant. All revenues put together in a Panchayat Fund.	Under the M.V.P. Act 1950, work done by the Village Courts under the Madras Village Courts Act, 1888, was given to the Panchayats. Pecuniary jurisdiction was raised from Rs. 50 to Rs. 100.	Cases up to the value of Rs. 100 can be tried. Fines for various types of offences may be imposed.	There are no separate Nyaya Panchayats in Madras. In 1951 the receipts of Panchayats were Rs. 154.05 lakhs and expenditure Rs. 144.81 lakhs.		Some of the provisions of the M.V.P. Act 1950 are unworkable. Suggestions : Constitution of Panchayats may be made optional rather than compulsory. The territorial unit be raised from 500 to 1,000 as it is now. (The Act provides for a Panchayat for every 1,000 population). Election of the President should be from the members of the Panchayat and not directly by the electorate as at present. Levy of professional tax, which is compulsory should be made optional. Act should be amended to provide 10% of the land revenue collected for distribution as grants to Class II Panchayats. Section 81 of the Act has been declared ultra vires of the fundamental Rights by the High Courts and needs to be amended. Village Courts and Village Panchayats should be distinct bodies.

CHAPTER XVII

ANDHRA

AN idea of the general configuration of villages in Andhra would be had from the previous chapter. The serious maldistribution of land in the State would be evident from figures returned by the Census of Landholdings conducted by the Land Reforms Division of the National Planning Commission. The following table gives holdings of different sizes according to area owned :

TABLE 71

S. No.	Grade of Holding	No. of holdings	Area owned (in acres)
1.	upto to 1 Acre	6,36,993	3,71,713
2.	1.0 to 2.5	6,15,557	10,45,556
3.	2.5 to 5.0	5,14,218	18,52,609
4.	5.0 to 7.5	2,60,358	15,81,271
5.	7.5 to 10.0	1,62,995	13,94,834
6.	10.0 to 12.5	1,03,540	11,54,424
7.	12.5 to 15.0	74,036	10,13,242
8.	15.0 to 17.5	52,175	8,42,825
9.	17.5 to 20.0	41,721	7,79,251
10.	20.0 to 25.0	53,514	11,89,339
11.	25.0 to 30.0	34,092	9,25,942
12.	30.0 to 35.0	22,543	7,25,983
13.	35.0 to 40.0	15,901	5,92,041
14.	40.0 to 45.0	11,487	4,85,721
15.	45.0 to 50.0	8,520	4,03,318
16.	50.0 to 60.0	11,023	6,01,374
17.	60.0 to 75.0	9,465	6,31,966
18.	75.0 to 100.0	7,420	6,35,612
19.	100.0 to 150.0	5,297	6,38,189
20.	150.0 to 200.0	1,898	3,25,894
21.	200.0 to 300.0	1,279	3,05,375
22.	300.0 to 500.0	662	2,48,952
23.	500.0 to 1,000.0	256	1,71,514
24.	More than 1,000.0	70	1,16,734
	Total	26,45,020	1,80,33,679

Thus, nearly 25 per cent of the holdings are 1 acre and less in size and total 3,71,713 acres out of a total holding area of 1,80,33,679 acres. Holdings of 2.5 acres and less constitute nearly 50 per cent of the total number of holdings and cover about 13 per cent of the total area of holdings. A considerable section of the rural population is constituted by landless or semi-landless people, and there is continuous conflict in the villages between them and their employers, the middling and substantial cultivators. This explains the influence of Kisan Sabhas in Andhra districts led by the Communists.

A Panchayat Conference In 1952

The State of Andhra was inaugurated on October 1, 1953, but even before that Panchayats had been formed in the various districts under the Madras Village Panchayat Act, 1950. Panchayat Conferences used to be held and there was a conscious public opinion demanding their revitalisation and more energetic steps by the State towards this end. Thus, for example, the Krishna District Panchayats Conference, held on October 29, 1952, at Vijayawada, under the presidentship of Shri N. Satyanarayana, demanded that classification of Panchayats into Major and Minor should be done away with. Instead, Panchayats with population of over 15,000 be brought under the amended Local Administration Act, and the smaller ones under the Panchayat Act. It also adopted resolutions requesting the Government to permit the establishment of Taluk, District and State Panchayat Unions and to appoint a Registrar-General who would ensure efficient and proper administration of Panchayats. At this Conference, which was inaugurated by the Madras Minister for Local Self-Government, Shri N. Satyanarayana delivered a very informative and thoughtful address. He traced the history of Panchayats in Madras and paid tributes to the work of the late N. Gopalaswamy Iyengar as Registrar-General. Referring to Mahatma Gandhi's ideas on Village Panchayats, he said: "In order to reconstruct India on peaceful and democratic foundations, it is desirable to establish self-governing village communities or Gram Panchayats to suit modern conditions." And he made the following significant remarks about the Madras Village Panchayat Act, 1950 : "Under the Act of 1950, a hierarchy of officials were appointed more for administrative purposes rather than for technical aid and assistance. In several Panchayat Conferences, resolutions were passed requesting the Government to appoint engineering staff to assist the Panchayat officers in preparing estimate and execution of works by Panchayats, but instead of appointing technicians to assist the Panchayats, Deputy Panchayat Officers were appointed and the execution of works of Panchayats was not attended to for want of technical sanction by the Local Administration, Engineering staff, and the P.W.D. Engineering Departments."[1]

Work Of Andhra Panchayats

When Andhra was constituted, the M.V.P. Act of 1950 continued to operate. The new State has 15,616 villages, out of which 3,769 were covered by Panchayats by 1954-55. According to a Government Report[2], during 1954-55 there were 195 Class I Panchayats and 3,574 Class II Panchayats. Out of these 215 had Executive Officers. Three Panchayats were dissolved and six Panchayats were superseded for maladministration, but one was restored on appeal. Presidents of 43 Panchayats were removed from office on charges of maladministration, of whom four were restored to office on appeal. The aggregate opening balance of all Class I Panchayats on 1st July 1954 was Rs. 35.1 lakhs, and the closing balance Rs. 34.93 lakhs, the receipts and expenditure during the period being Rs. 72.5 lakhs and Rs. 72.67 lakhs, respectively. The opening balance of all Class II Panchayats was Rs. 62.02 lakhs, the receipts and expenditure being Rs. 99.64 lakhs and Rs. 101.13 lakhs, respectively. 12,967 pupils studied in 200 elementary schools maintained by the Panchayats, which were sanctioned a grant of Rs. 1.54 lakhs by the Government. A sum of Rs. 24.79 lakhs was spent on medical relief and public health by the Panchayats which maintained eleven Ayurvedic dispensaries and two maternity centres. The Panchayats laid 607 miles of new earthen roads and 450 miles of new metalled roads, and they spent Rs. 33.07 lakhs on the maintenance of roads. A sum of Rs. 2.74 lakhs was disbursed to the Panchayats towards half-grant for the improvement of village communications.

Polamur Village Panchayat: An Object Lesson In Panchayat Work

The useful work done by Panchayats in Andhra would be apparent from the above. In fact, in Andhra districts, some Panchayats had given creditable performance even in earlier days. We will cite the example of a village Polamur with a population of 4,281 in Tanuku Taluk of West Godavari district[3]. Before Polamur had its Panchayat, "the village tanks were so bad that Miss Mayo might have got her ideas about the drinking-water sources of India from a look at them." After the Panchayat had worked for some years, all the streets and lanes have good metalled or gravelled roads. The roads maintained by the Panchayats are :

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[1] **Indian Express, (Madras edition), 1.11.1952.**

[2] **Andhra State Administration Report,** Andhra Government Press, Kurnool, 1956, p. 108.

[3] **See Madras Information,** Vol. VII, No. 1 of January 1953; article by Shri K. C. Menon, I.C.S., Inspector of Municipal Councils and Local Boards, entitled "Progress in Polamur Panchayat."

	Miles	Furlongs	Feet
Metalled roads 30 feet broad ..	0	4	0
Metalled roads—			
18 feet broad ..	3	4	0
12 feet broad ..	0	3	0
10 feet broad ..	1	5	0
8 feet broad ..	0	6	0
Gravelled road	1	5	330
Earthen roads	7	2	330
Total ..	15	6	0

The total value of all the road works done by the Panchayat, including fixing of pipes and construction of culverts, is Rs. 3,10,874. The Government gave half the cost, some aid was received from the West Godavari District Board, and the villagers contributed about Rs. 31,700 by way of money, labour and materials.

Equally remarkable results have been shown by the Panchayat in the improvement of its water resources. The total extent of its tanks is 43.50 acres. Four of its five tanks have been deepened at a heavy cost. Their bunds are raised and protected. All the ways leading to the water line are closed to cattle and pigs. Cholera and typhoid, which formerly recurred off and on in Polamur, have now become rare. The estimated value of the water supply works executed by the Panchayat is Rs. 43,700. The actual expenditure has been Rs. 28,684, out of which the villagers paid Rs. 3,000 in cash and the rest through free labour, materials, etc.

The Polamur Panchayat maintains five sweepers and two scavengers to keep the village neat and tidy. There are four common type latrines in the village. The Panchayat has now proposed to construct septic tank latrines of six seats each, the cost of which will come to about Rs. 20,000.

The Panchayat has built up a library and reading room and maintains them. The library has 3,652 valuable books of which 2,499 are Telugu, 962 English, 64 Sanskrit, 100 Hindi, 14 Urdu and 13 Tamil. The total value of the books is Rs. 10,000. The Panchayat library gets 28 papers and journals, including 3 dailies. The annual expenditure on the library and reading room is Rs. 1,250. The villagers raised by themselves a sum of Rs. 24,000 to enable the District Board to start a high school which has 20 teachers and 540 pupils.

Deserving of special mention are the methods employed by the Polamur Panchayat to augment its income. It has taken up intensive culture of fish. Seedlings and younglings of fish of reputed varieties are procured from outside and reared carefully in village tanks. The right of auctioning fish annually has been taken over by the Panchayat from the Revenue Department, which never got more than Rs. 120 in a year. Now the income from this source is running into thousands of rupees. And it is hoped that after some time the income from this source will go up to Rs. 50,000. By planting coconut trees on tank bunds and road margins, the Panchayat earns Rs. 800 per year, and hopes to raise it to Rs. 4,000 through coconut and vegetable plantation. Further, the Panchayat has taken over for five years' average lease amount of Rs. 60 the right of selling the grass and the usufruct of trees on the banks of the canals and channels, which are under the management of the Public Works Department within the limits of the village. Its annual income from this source is Rs. 1,300.

Andhra Amendment Of Madras Panchayat Act

Panchayats in Andhra are governed by the Madras Village Panchayat Act of 1950, which we have already described in the previous chapter. This Madras Act has been amended twice by the Andhra State Assembly. The Madras Village Panchayats (Andhra Second Amendment) Act (XXII of 1955) was passed by the State Assembly on December 8, 1955, and received the Governor's assent on December 15. The Act provides for reservation of a seat for women in each Panchayat by co-option by Panchayat members. It also provides for election of Panchayat Presidents by members instead of being elected by electors as provided in the principal Act. The Act provides that "every Panchayat shall levy in the village a house tax and a profession tax." It also enables Panchayats, irrespective of their classification, to levy a vehicle tax —a discretion given only to Class I Panchayats under the principal Act. The Act further directs that the Panchayats should pay to the Government out of the Panchayat fund such sum as may be determined by the Inspector towards the pay and allowances of auditors who audit Panchayat accounts. The Act also lays down: "No person shall open a new private market or continue to keep open a private market unless he obtains from the Panchayat a licence to do so."

Village Vigilance Committees In Andhra

Andhra has a system of Village Vigilance Committees which assist the Government in detection of crimes and other ways. The relationship between such Village Vigilance Committees and the Village Panchayats is not clear; most probably they are independent of each other. Village Vigilance Committees exist in all the districts except in Railway Police district. The extent to which they helped the police during 1954 is shown in the following table[1]:

TABLE 72

Districts	No. of Village Vigilance Committees on 31st December, 1954	No. of Indian Penal Code cases in which accused were arrested with property (excluding cattle thefts)	No. of cattle thefts in which accused were arrested with property	No. of O.V. bad characters (K.Ds., D.Cs., etc., traced or arrested or put up for security)	No. of Warrantees arrested	No. of O.V.N.T. members traced or arrested	Gambling cases put up
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Visakhapatnam North	911	86	6	6	6	3	170
Visakhapatnam South	150	44	6	7	..	..	30
East Godavari	254	34	4	27	4	..	..
West Godavari	560	36	9	16	6	..	149
Krishna	594	45	7	9	1	..	34
Guntur	659	42	13	16	1	..	..
Nellore	753	28	1	3	..	8	..
Kurnool Urban	20	6	5	1	..	..	..
Kurnool Rural	646	45	1	21	..	..	..
Anantapur	350	22	5	2	1	..	..
Cuddapah	165	16	2	10	..	..	..
Chitoor	236	35	3	5	..	..	..
Total	5,298	439	62	123	19	11	383

We regret that we have no fuller reports of the working of these Village Vigilance Committees. As it is, they number 5,298, which is more than the number of Village Panchayats hitherto constituted in the State. Village defence and vigilance used to be one of the most important functions of our village bodies in ancient times, and there is no reason why today also village vigilance work should not be made the responsibility of our Panchayats, and no separate committee set up for them.

Judicial Work Not Impressive

It would appear that the judicial work of Panchayats in Andhra, as in Madras, has not been very encouraging. According to authoritative information, the experience of the working of Nyaya Panchayats reveals that the Panchayats are not taking adequate interest in discharging the judicial functions assigned to them. There is no perceptible reduction in litigation as the villagers do not feel confident about their cases being justly decided by the court. On the contrary, says an Andhra Government note, the Panchayats have accentuated party feelings and group differences in the villages, which are not conducive to the healthy working of the courts, which thus do not work satisfactorily. The authorities are of the opinion that any suggestions to improve the working of Panchayat Courts may not have any appreciable effect on their working so long as party feeling and group differences exist in villages. The first thing to be aimed at is to change the entire factious atmosphere that is prevailing in villages. The Presidents and members of the Panchayat Courts need to be trained in Civil and Criminal Law for a clear understanding of rudiments of justice. It is desirable to give some basic training in Civil and Criminal Law, confining to the main principles of evidence and procedure, for a fair trial of cases.

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[1] Report on the Administration of the Police of the Andhra State, Government Press, Kurnool, p. 31.

A possible explanation of this state of affairs in the villages is given by Shri S. L. Narasimha Rao of Cuddapah district in his reply to the Questionnaire of the Congress Village Panchayat Committee[1]. Says Sri Rao: "At present, in most of the villages, there are a few individuals and families who own vast extents of land and large amounts of cash and movable properties, much in excess of their real and reasonable requirements. Such possession of wealth may be hereditary or acquired in recent generations. Much of this wealth is ill-gotten at the expense of other people. This landed and wealthy class always tries to further strengthen itself by influencing the politics and policies of Government, and also the daily life in villages. No democratic form of Government will thrive so long as these glaring inequalities persist and are continued in society. This class should be exterminated peacefully—not individuals but the class as such—by an equitable distribution of land and wealth."

Future Prospects

Presenting the Budget of 1956-57 to the State Assembly on March 2, 1956, Andhra's Chief Minister, Shri B. Gopala Reddi, said : "The Second Five-Year Plan of this State has been built from the village upwards......Village plans have been prepared on the basis of the widest participation of the people and have been integrated into district plans." Shri Gopala Reddi, later in his speech, gives the following information : "At the end of September last, the State had two Community Development Projects, 13 Community Development Blocks and 16 National Extension Service Blocks, covering an area of 2,567 villages. An amount of Rs. 68.93 lakhs has been spent on the two Community Development Projects, of which a sum of Rs. 38.85 lakhs was realised as voluntary contribution from the public in the form of cash, labour and materials. The contribution from the people in the National Extension Service Blocks also was very encouraging."

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[1] Report of the Congress Village Panchayat Committee, Op. cit., pp. Lxxiv-Lxxv. The Report gives an abstract of his reply. We are quoting from the original reply in A.I.C.C. Office files.

The report of working of Panchayats given earlier in this chapter, the example of Polamur Panchayat, and the above statement of Andhra's Chief Minister are proof positive of the fact that the Panchayat experiment in the State has come to stay and has shown commendable results. In order to carry forward this work, it is of the utmost importance that progressive land legislations are soon enacted in order to reduce property differences in Andhra villages and bring about a just land system, for only under conditions of social justice can Panchayats blossom to their full.

CHAPTER XVIII

ASSAM

THE State of Assam, apart from the hilly portion which takes up half of its present area and is sparsely populated, comprises in its plain portion two valleys, namely, the Bramhaputra Valley on the north and the Surma Valley on the south, separated from each other by the Assam range of hills, which, projecting from the range of the Burma border, extends westwards throughout the length of the State up to the district of Mymensingh in East Pakistan. Assam, indeed, may be said to have undergone more boundary changes than any other State of India. By the Proclamation of February 6, 1874, issued under the Government of India Act, 1854, the following districts were formed into the Chief Commissionership of Assam: Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur, Cachar, The Garo Hills, the Khasi and the Jaintia Hills, and the Naga Hills. Sylhet and Lushai Hills were added by subsequent Proclamations. This Chief Commissionership of Assam was first merged in the province of Eastern Bengal and Assam (1905), then separated again into a Chief Commissionership (1912), and finally made a Governor's Province in 1921.

Over this territory, strategically situated as it was, the British Land and Revenue Regulation of 1886 (enacted by the Governor-General-in-Council and amended by Regulation II of 1889 and another of 1905) sought to legalise and perpetuate all the illegal acts of the early British conquerors. In Assam, in the interregnum and chaos that followed the fall of the local rulers and the final enthronement of British authority, local despots, not unoften robbers and highwaymen, had usurped the ownership of land and destroyed the security of tenure which vast sections of the cultivating population enjoyed under the widely prevalent Panchayat system. In their final land settlement, the British recognised a great many of these usurpations and created out of them a class of vested interests in land, interested in the perpetuation of British authority. This was, however, not a peaceful process. The enhancement of land revenue was followed by furious agrarian revolts in Patharughat, Mangaldoi, Ranguja, Byaskushi, Samkhetri, etc.

Area And Population

The area of Assam as shown in the 1941 Census Report was 67,359 against 85,012 sq. miles as determined by the Surveyor

General of India and given in the 1951 Census Table A-I[1]. The State Survey Department gives for Assam an area of 85,294 sq. miles (23,138 sq. miles Assam Plains and 62,156 sq. miles Assam Hills). Another official publication[2] gives the total area of the State as 54,084 sq. miles, which is slightly higher than the censused area shown in table given in the footnote.

Howsoever it be, according to the 1951 Census, Assam had a population of 90,43,707 of which 86,29,289 or 95.4 per cent was rural and 4,14,418 or 4.6 per cent was urban. In 1941, the total population was 75,93,037. The density of population per square mile was 140 in 1941 and 167.2 in 1951, increasing by 19.1 per cent during the decade. Assam presents wide diversity in the population, cultivation, etc., of its different tracts. Table 74 [3] (p. 436) gives distribution of area and population by districts in Assam.

The density of population has been steadily rising in Assam. From 103 persons per square mile in 1921 it shot up by 71 per cent, to 176 in 1951. This increase is not evenly spread. In the Assam Plains, it increased from 198 persons per square mile in 1921 to 339 in 1951, that is, an increase of 141 persons for every square mile of its area within 3 decades, or an increase of 71 per cent. In Assam Hills it was only 17 persons per sq. mile in the three decades. R. B. Vaghaiwalla remarks :[4] "Three-fourth of the entire area of

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[1] The 1931 Census gives the area of Assam as 67,334 sq. miles. The 1941 figure, however, includes the area of the whole Sylhet, 5,478 sq. miles, as well as Manipur, 8,620 sq. miles. The 1951 area excludes Manipur and includes 709 sq. miles (Thanas Badarpur, Ratabari, Patharkandi, and a portion of Kasimganj) of the old district of Sylhet, which went to East Pakistan as a result of the Radcliffe Award; the comparative figure for Assam for 1941 will be 53,970 sq. miles. The 1951 area exceeds the 1941 figures by the huge margin of 31,042 sq. miles, mainly because the 1951 figure shows the total area of the State including those parts which were not regularly censused, whereas the 1941 figure applies only to the censused portions of the State and omits the uncensused area. The 1951 Census included the Sadiya and Balipara Frontier Tracts and the Naga Tribal Areas. In the case of Assam, it may be borne in mind, there is a considerable difference between the actual area of the State and its Natural Divisions and Sub-Divisions as given by the Surveyor General and that of their portions which were actually censused. See the following table giving area, actual and censused, of Assam and its Natural Divisions :

TABLE 73

	Actual area sq. miles	Censused area sq. miles
ASSAM STATE	85,012	51,415
Assam Plains	23,033	23.033
Assam Hills	61,979	28,382
Autonomous Districts	27,010	27,010
North-East Frontier Agency (N.E.F.A.)	34,969	1,372

(R.B. Vaghaiwalla : Census of India, 1951, Vol. XII, Assam, Manipur and Tripura, Part I-A-Report; Shillong, 1954, pp. 3-6).

[2] Agricultural Wages in India, Vol. I, Op. cit., p. 51.

[3] R. B. Vaghaiwalla, Census of India, 1951, Vol. XII, Op. cit., p. 23.

[4] Ibid, p. 27-28.

TABLE 74

No.	District		Area in sq. miles (000's Omitted)	Rank in order of area	Population (in lakhs)	Rank in order of population	Density per sq. mile	Rank in order of density
1	2		3	4	5	6	7	8
1.	Cachar	..	2.7	15	11.2	3	415	1
2.	Goalpara	..	4.0	9	11.1	4	278	6
3.	Kamrup	..	3.8	10	14.9	1	387	3
4.	Darrang	..	2.8	14	9.1	6	325	5
5.	Nowgong	..	2.2	16	8.9	7	409	2
6.	Sibsagar	..	3.5	11	12.1	2	351	4
7.	Lakhimpur	..	4.1	8	10.8	5	265	7
8.	United K & J Hills	..	5.5	6	3.6	8	66	11
9.	Naga Hills	..	4.3	7	2.1	10	48	12
10.	Lushai Hills	..	8.1	4	2.0	11	24	16
11.	Garo Hills	..	3.2	12	2.4	9	77	10
12.	United Mikir & North Cachar Hills	..	5.9	5	1.7	12	28	15
13.	Mishmi Hills	..	9.4	2	0.3	13	82	9
14.	Abor Hills	..	8.5	3	0.1	14	39	14
15.	Tirap Frontier Tract	..	2.9	13	0.1	17	42	13
16.	Balipara Frontier Tract		12.1	1	0.1	15	18	17
17.	Naga Tribal Area	..	2.1	17	0.1	16	141	8

Assam supports only 1|3rd of its population, leaving the remaining 2|3rds to be crowded into only 1|4th of its area; or to put it differently, over 3|4th of Assam's population derives its sustenance from only 1|3rd of the area, whereas the remaining 1|4th of the population has the remaining 2|3rd area to live on."

The Most Rural State Of India

Assam, along with Orissa, is the most rural State of India inasmuch as 95.4 per cent of its population lives in villages. During the last 30 years its rurality has declined by 2.2 per cent only and urbanisation increased from 2.4 per cent to 4.6 per cent. See the following table :[1]

TABLE 75

Year		Percentage of population which was	
		Rural	Urban
1921	..	97.6	2.4
1931	..	97.0	3.0
1941	..	96.7	3.3
1951	..	95.4	4.6

The total as well as the rural and urban population of Assam and its Natural Divisions as revealed by the 1951 Census would be found in the following table[2] :

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[1] Ibid, p. 126.

[2] Ibid, p. 123.

TABLE 76

	Assam		Assam Plains		Assam Hills	
	Total	Per cent	Total	Per cent	Total	Per cent
Total ..	90,43,707	100	78,05,558	100	12,38,149	100
Rural ..	86,29,289	95.4	74,67,939	95.7	11,61,350	93.6
Urban ..	4,14,418	4.6	3,37,619	4.3	76,799	6.4

The Assam Village

This huge rural population of Assam lives in 25,327 villages as against the urban population of 4,14,418 living in 28 towns. In the 1951 Census, Cachar and the five upper districts of Assam Valley, where there had been a cadastral survey, the cadastral village was treated as a village for the purpose of the Census. Elsewhere in the plains, where there had been no cadastral survey, the definition was : "A *gaon* or *gram* together with its adjoining *tolas, paras,* etc., provided that none of these dependent collections of houses are so large on so distinct from the central village as to form by themselves true villages with distinct individual names." In hill districts, the most convenient definition of a village was generally found to be a collection of houses bearing a separate name. Tea gardens are, of course, treated separately from the villages.

Vaghaiwalla remarks : "The villages of Assam are not true villages as ordinarily understood. A cadastral village, the unit of the revenue survey is locally a very well known unit; it has been surveyed and mapped and the ordinary villager understands it well. It is, however, by no means a village in the ordinary sense of the word; it merely happens to be the most convenient unit on which to base the frame-work of the Census." And Vaghaiwalla adds : "In Assam, villages and residential units only in the hills correspond generally to what would be called a village in any other part of the world."[1]

Out of 25,237 villages of Assam, by far the large majority, 17,948, that is, 70 per cent, is found in Assam Plains, Assam Hills having only 7,379 or 30 per cent. Goalpara district has 4,148 villages, or 1|6th of the total number of villages in Assam. Kamrup has 2,789 and Nowgong 1,735. In the Hill districts, Garo Hills contains 2,257 villages, the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills 1,871 and the United K. and J. Hills 1,802. The villages of Naga Hills and Lushai Hills are larger in size and number 496 and 631, respectively.

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[1] Ibid, p. 120.

Population By Villages

The average population for an Assam village works out to 341 persons per village. The average for Assam Plains is 416, and for Assam Hills 157. In Sibsagar district, the average per village is as high as 527, but it falls to less than half this peak number in Goalpara, namely 257. In Assam Hills, the highest population per village is in the Naga Hills, namely, 407.

For purposes of the Census, Assam villages were divided into the following four groups: (i) Very large-population of 5,000 and above; (ii) Large-population of 2,000 to 5,000; (iii) Medium-population of 500 to 2,000; (iv) Small-population below 500.

Only 0.8 per cent of the rural population lives in very large villages. In the Census of 1951, normally a habitation of more than 5,000 has been regarded as a town, but some of these have been placed in village category because of their distinct rural characteristics. Villages of the second category contain 7.7 per cent of the rural population of the State. The break-up for the Natural Divisions is 8.7 per cent for Assam Plains and 1.7 for Assam Hills. The largest number of Assam villages belong to the third category, the medium villages. They contain nearly half, 49.6 per cent, of the rural population of Assam. This group is smaller in Assam Hills, containing little over 27 per cent of the rural population; in Assam Plains it is 54 per cent. The percentage in the Plain districts varies from 31.6 for Goalpara to 66.8 in Nowgong, which is closely followed by Sibsagar (65.6) and Cachar (64.3). The fourth category of villages in Assam, the small villages, contains 42 per cent of the rural population. This group is far larger in Assam Hills where it contains as much as 71 per cent of the entire population as against 37.4 per cent in the Assam Plains.

The Livelihood Pattern

The livelihood pattern[1] for Assam and its natural divisions would be found in Table 77[2] (p. 439).

Though overwhelmingly rural, the agricultural classes in Assam constitute only 73.3 per cent, which figure is lower than the corresponding figures of Bihar (86.0), Orissa (79.3), Madhya Pra-

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[1] The agricultural classes I, II, III & IV are the same as mentioned in earlier chapters. These categories were laid by the Central Census Commissioner and are uniformly followed in all State Censuses.

[2] Vaghaiwalla, Ibid, p. 102.

TABLE 77

Livelihood Class	Assam		Assam Plains		Assam Hills	
	Total	Per cent	Total	Per cent	Total	Per cent
I	52,35,791	57.9	47,28,031	54 8	9,57,750	77.4
II	11,58,254	12.8	11,04,618	14.2	53,636	4.3
III	1,57,343	1.7	1,23,338	1.6	34,005	2.7
IV	81,604	0.9	75.597	0.9	6,007	0.5
Total Agricultural	66,32,992	73.3	55,81,584	71.5	10,51,408	84.9
Total Non-Agricultural	24,10,715	26.7	22,23,974	28.5	1,86,741	15.1
TOTAL	90.40.707	100.0	78,05,558	100.0	12,38,149	100.0

desh (7.6) and Uttar Pradesh (74.2)[1]. The average for Assam, however, is widely divergent from the livelihood pattern in the districts as would be apparent from the following table:[2]

TABLE 78

S. No.	District	Agricultural (per cent)	Non-Agricultural (per cent)
1.	Cachar	59.9	40.1
2.	Goalpara	85.2	14.8
3.	Kamrup	80.4	19.6
4.	Darrang	70.5	29.4
5.	Nowgong	85.4	14.6
6.	Sibsagar	64.5	35.5
7.	Lakhimpur	54.6	45.4
8.	United K & J Hills	67.7	32.3
9.	Naga Hills	94.1	5.9
10.	Lushai Hills	93.0	7.0
11.	Garo Hills	95.0	5.0
12.	United Mikir & North Cachar Hills	94.0	6.0
13.	Mishmi Hills .	65.7	34.3
14.	Abor Hills	60.4	39.6
15.	Tirap Frontier Tract	69.2	30.8
16.	Balipara Frontier Tract	55.5	44.4
17.	Naga Tribal Area	97.6	2.4

Goalpara, Nowgong and Kamrup show a higher percentage of agricultural population because there are no tea estates as against

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[1] From this one should not get the impression that Assam is more industrialised than the others. Vaghaiwalla correctly points out : "This is more apparent than real because large numbers of its immense tea garden population, forming about 12 per cent of the total population of Assam, are excluded from agriculture and counted under non-agriculture." (p. 103).

[2] Ibid, p. 106.

Lakhimpur, Cachar and Sibsagar, where the non-agricultural percentage is forced up by tea.

Livelihood Pattern Of The Agricultural Classes

Our study shows that out of a total population of 90,43,707 in Assam, 66,32,992 belong to agriculture, out of whom 52,35,791 or 57.9 per cent are cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned and their dependents, and 11,58,254 or 12.8 per cent are cultivators of land wholly or mainly unowned and their dependents. The agricultural labourers and their dependents, according to the 1951 Census, are barely 1,57,343 or a mere 1.7 per cent of the population and the agricultural rent-receivers and their dependents only 0.9 per cent. The relative proportion of different classes as percentages of the total agricultural population would be found in the following table :[1]

TABLE 79

State & Natural Division	Percentage distribution of Agricultural Classes belonging to Livelihood Class			
	I	II	III	IV
Assam ..	78.9	17.5	2.4	1.2
Assam Plains ..	76.7	19.8	2.2	1.3
Assam Hills ..	91.1	5.1	3.2	0.6

The percentages of livelihood classes returned by the 1951 Census are in general agreement with the figures returned by the General Village, General Family, and Intensive Family Surveys of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry of the Union Ministry of Labour in so far as Classes I & II are concerned, but there is a wide divergence in the figures returned for Class III, that is, the agricultural labourers. That the cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned constitute the largest number is not surprising since Census enumeration includes under 'ownership' all tenures involving the right of permanent occupancy of land for cultivation. In other words, the livelihood pattern reflects, not the legal position as landlord or tenant but the actual occupancy of land for the purpose of cultivation. Thus all raiyats, tenants and *jotedars* having occupancy right, etc., in the zamindari tracts of Assam are enumerated in Category I. The occupants in the remaining Ryotwari areas are, of course, included in this Category. As for Category II, cultivators of land wholly or mainly unowned and their dependents, only patta-holders, *bargadars, adhiars,* and *ejaradars* are included in it.

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[1] Ibid, p. 183.

The Agricultural Labourers

The explanation offered for the low percentage returned for agricultural labourers in the Assam Census Report does not, however, sound convincing. Vaghaiwalla says that "the desire for social prestige by returning themselves as owner cultivators rather than as agricultural labourers accounts for the fact that Assam has by far the lowest percentage of its population in this class." He contends that "Most of them (agricultural labourers—*author*) are in a position now rather rare in the rest of India, of owning their own plots of land." We are not very sure. The General Village Survey of the Union Ministry of Labour gives the following table [1] about the occupational distribution of agricultural families in the three zones into which it divided Assam for purposes of its Survey :

TABLE 80

Zone	No. of villages	Population	Total No. of families	Average size of family	No of Agricultural families: Owners	Tenants	Agricultural Workers	Total
I	11	3,483	611	5.7	328	149	39	516
II	9	2,857	556	5.1	228	101	104	433
III	5	4,983	1,180	4.2	614	155	60	829
TOTAL	25	11,323	2,347	4.8	1,170	405	203	1,778

According to this table, the agricultural workers constituted about 9 per cent of the total number of families and about 11 per cent of the total agricultural families in the surveyed villages. The General Family Survey surveyed 32 villages spread over three zones into which it divided Assam for its purpose. The following table [2] gives the occupational distribution of families as found by it :

TABLE 81

		Agricultural landownership	Agricultural tenancy	Agricultural Labour: with land	without land	Total	Total Agricultural families	Total non-agricultural families	IIV families
All	(a)	1,693	426	141	86	227	1,746	370	2,118
Sample	(b)	6,046	2,236	674	297	971	9,258	1,544	10,800
Villages	(c)	(5.53)	(5.26)	(4.78)	(3.45)	(4.28)	(5.30)	(4.17)	(5.10)

(a) Total number of families
(b) Total number of persons
(c) Average size of family

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[1] Agricultural Wages in India, Vol. I. Op. cit., p. 52.

[2] Rural Man-Power and Occupational Structure, Op. cit.; Constructed from table on p. 41.

Caste Composition Of Village Population

It follows that out of the 2,118 families, 1,746 or 82.4 per cent were agricultural, 1,093 or 51.6 per cent being owners, 426 or 20.1 per cent being tenants and 227 or 10.7 per cent agricultural workers' families. The General Family Survey gives the following information about the caste composition of different livelihood classes. Of the 1,093 families of agricultural owners, 700 or 64 per cent belonged to scheduled castes and tribes, aboriginal communities and backward classes while 25 were Brahmins, 66 Kshatriyas and 19 Vaishyas. The remaining 283 belonged to other communities. Of the 426 families of tenants, only 34 families came from the Brahmins, Kshatriya and Vaishya castes taken together, as against 242 belonging to scheduled castes and tribes, aboriginal communities and backward classes, and 140 other castes and communities. Agricultural workers were drawn from all castes other than Brahmins. Of the 227 families of agricultural workers, 29 were scheduled castes and tribes, 44 tribal and aboriginal communities, 37 backward classes, 27 Kshatriyas and 3 Vaishyas, and 86 belonged to other castes and communities.

Distribution Of Agricultural Holdings

This low percentage of agricultural labourers, the high proportion of agricultural owners, and the comparatively low proportion of the tenants should not, however, be regarded to mean that the condition of the Assam peasantry is rather better than elsewhere. For one, Assam has been singularly unfortunate in the yearly visitation of floods[1] which leave behind misery and poverty in their trail. For another, the system of tenant cultivation in Assam has been one of the most exploitative,[2] and the condition apparently has not undergone any material change in the last few years. Over and above this, the large majority of cultivators are apparently operating upon small-sized uneconomic holdings. No overall picture for the State is available in regard to sizes of holdings. Vaghaiwalla, in the absence of any statistics, expresses his inability to discuss different agricultural classes co-related to distribution of land in agricultural holdings of different size. He has referred to two surveys conducted by two officers of the Assam Government. Dr. M. N. Goswami and Shri S. S. Sarma, in Darrang and Sibsagar districts. The following table[1] shows families classified by size of holding and the total area under each-size holding in Darrang district as given by Dr. Goswami :

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[1] "Making a conservative estimate." Hari Prasad Barua, regarded as a specialist in river training schemes, said in 1951, that during the previous decade and a half the people's total loss from floods "in silver coins is sufficient to go round the equator twice over if laid touching each other." (**Hindusthan Standard**, Feb. 2, 1951).

[2] Presenting the Budget for 1948-49 to the State Assembly on March 11, 1948, the State's Finance Minister, Shri Bishnuram Medhi (now Assam's Chief Minister) said : "After full enquiry it has been ascertained that rent in kind or share of crop realised by rent-receivers in the *Adhi* or *Barga* system or on a contract system is very high in the permanently settled areas an well as......the ryotwari areas. Tenants in occupation of land for a long time are being ejected on unreasonable grounds with a view to letting out land to new cultivators on high rates of rent in kind. The tenants who cultivate under settlement holders have to pay much more in rent than the settlement holders directly under Government."

TABLE 82

Area of holding (in bighas)	No. of families in each class of Col. (1)	Percentage of total No. of families to grand total of Col. (2)	Area under holding of each class in Col. (1) (in bighas)	Percentage of total area to grand total of Col. (4)
1	2	3	4	5
0	483	18.484	..	..
1—3	325	12.438	580	1.55
4—5	206	7.88	932	2.48
6—10	401	15.35	3,221	5.59
11—15	319	12.21	4,098	10.92
16—20	256	9.797	4,540	12.10
21—25	175	6.70	4,052	10.80
26—30	118	4.516	3,266	8.70
31—50	221	8.46	8,425	22.46
Above 50	109	4.171	8,403	22.40
Total	2,613	..	37,517	..

It follows that 18.484 per cent of the families are without land while more than a quarter hold between 6 and 15 bighas per family. Families with more than 30 bighas each constitute only 12.6 per cent of the total. Small holdings (10 bighas and less) constitute 43.6 per cent, medium holdings (between 11 and 30 bighas) constitute 44.1 per cent, and large holdings (30 bighas and above) constitute 12.3 per cent of the total number of holdings. In point of area covered, however, the importance of these 3 types of holdings is just the reverse. Large holdings cover 44.8 per cent of area, medium holdings 42.5 per cent, and small holdings only 12.6 per cent. "Speaking broadly, the typical holdings in the district as shown by our Sample are those which measure 5 bighas and 16 bighas. Between them they represent the conditions prevailing in 87 per cent of the agricultural holdings."

The General Family Survey gives a more vivid account of the position in Assam regarding size of holdings. Table 83[2] (p. 444-445) gives size distribution of cultivators' holdings according to categories of families.

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[1] Vaghaiwalla, Op. cit., Appendix 6, page 390.

[2] Rural Man-Power and Occupational Structure, Op. cit., p. 48

TABLE

Size of Holdings	HOLDER'S FAMILY			
	Agricultural ownership		Agricultural tenancy	
	No	Area (Acres)	No.	Area (Acres)
1	2	3	4	5
Under 1 acre	8	5.62	11	8.61
1 acre and under 2.5 acres ..	93	174.67	122	225.64
2.5 acres and under 5 acres ..	389	1,471.54	174	607.59
5 acres and under 7.5 acres ..	233	1,429.92	70	422.27
7.5 acres and under 10 acres ..	106	919.99	22	187.34
10 acres and under 25 acres ..	174	2,536.17	14	183.89
25 acres and under 50 acres ..	6	177.23	1	25.10
50 acres and under 100 acres ..	..	..	1	66.06
100 acres and above ..	..	..	nil	..
TOTAL ..	1,011	6,715.14	415	1,726.50
Average size of holding ..	..	6.64	..	4.16

Note : Figures within brackets denote percentages to total.

Thus, of the 1,716 holdings in the sample villages, 88 per cent were less than 10 acres, 11 per cent were in size group 10-25 acres, and only 1 per cent in the size group 25 acres and above. The average size for about 62 per cent of the total number of holdings was only 2.79 acres, the overall average being 5.31 acres. Of the 1,716 holdings, 1,011 or 58.9 per cent belonged to agricultural landowners and these covered about 6,715 acres or 73.6 per cent of the total area. Of these 1,011 holdings, 490 were less than 5 acres each, 341 between 5 and 10 acres, 174 between 10 and 25 acres and 6 between 25 and 50 acres. Agricultural workers had 127 holdings, or 7.4 per cent of the total, the area held by them being 223.75 acres, or 2 per cent of the total area. Except for 5 holdings between 5 and 10 acres, all were less than 5 acres. The average size per holding in the case of agricultural landowners was 6.66 acres, as against 4.16, 1.75 and 2.77 acres in the case of tenants, agricultural workers and non-agricultural workers, respectively.

The Assam Rural Panchayat Act, 1948, (Assam Act XXVII

83

OCCUPATION				TOTAL	
Agricultural Labour		Non-agricultural		Number of holdings	Area (Acres)
No.	Area (Acres)	No.	Area (Acres)		
6	7	8	9	10	11
48	16.44	43	13.43	110 (6.41)	44.10 (.48)
46	73.02	47	79.29	306 (17.95)	552.62 (6.06)
28	100.50	53	198.46	644 (37.52)	2,365.09 (25.94)
4	24.97	8	46.35	315 (18.36)	1,923.57 (21.10)
1	8.82	7	61.82	138 (8.04)	1,177.79 (12.92)
nil	..	5	64.52	193 (11.25)	2,784.58 (30.56)
nil	..	nil	..	7 (.41)	202.33 (2.22)
nil	..	nil	..	1 (0.6)	66.06 (0.72)
nil	..	nil	..	nil	..
127	223.75	163	450.87	1,716	9,116.26
				(100.00)	(100.00)
..	1.75	..	2.77	..	5.31

of 1948), after being passed by the State Assembly, received the assent of the Governor-General on November 23, 1948, and was immediately enforced. The object of the Act is to establish and develop local self-government in the rural areas of Assam, and to make better provision for rural administration, reconstruction and development as self-sufficient autonomous units.

The Primary Panchayats

The Act lays down that the Government may, by notification, declare any area to be a Rural Panchayat Area, laying down its territorial jurisdiction and name. In each area declared a Rural Panchayat, there may be as many Primary Panchayats as may be deemed necessary by the Deputy Commissioner or the Sub-Divisional Officer, as the case may be. A Primary Panchayat is composed of all adults having a permanent residence within its area and forms the electorate for the Rural Panchayat. Every Primary Panchayat has to elect an executive committee from among its members, called the Primary Panchayat Executive Committee, and a President and a Vice-President. The members of the Executive Committee, including the President and the Vice-

President, shall not exceed 15 and shall not be less than 9. The term of the President and Vice-President as also the members is fixed at three years. The President is responsible for proper maintenance of the Primary Panchayat Office. The Primary Panchayat is required to maintain a register of members, open to scrutiny and periodic revision. Each Primary Panchayat in consultation with the President is required to appoint a Secretary "who shall be responsible, in addition to his duties, for carrying out economic surveys as prescribed and be paid from the Panchayat Fund." [Sec. 12(2)]. The Act lays down elaborate procedures for Panchayat meetings, filling up of vacancies, etc.

The Rural Panchayats

And here we come across a system which may be regarded as typical of Assam. Above the Primary Panchayats there are Rural Panchayats. Each Primary Panchayat is required to elect one representative for every 200 of its members or a fraction thereof to the Rural Panchayat. Government servants, dismissed Government employees, persons convicted of crime involving moral turpitude or ordered to give security under Section 110, etc., are debarred from seeking election. The State Government can appoint officers as ex-officio members, who shall have the right to attend all meetings of the Panchayat and give expert opinion or advice, but shall have no right to vote. The Rural Panchayats have a three-year term, and one-third of the members have to retire annually by drawing of lots. Once it is constituted, the Rural Panchayat has to elect a President and a Vice-President, their term being three years. The President, so elected, has then to select from five to nine members, representative of different interests in the Rural Panchayat, to constitute his *Mantri Sabha* (Cabinet of Ministers). The President shall assign to each cabinet member, who shall be responsible to him and hold office at his pleasure, such duties and functions as he may deem fit. The President is required to hold a meeting of the Rural Panchayat once every month. Procedures for calling of meetings and removal of President are elaborated in the Act. The Deputy Commissioner or the Sub-Divisional Officer has the power to appoint a Rural Panchayat Secretary for each Panchayat area, to be paid from the Sub-Divisional Development Fund. The Rural Panchayat has the power to employ, with the previous consent of the Deputy Commissioner or the Sub-Divisional Officer, such staff as necessary for carrying out the duties imposed by the Act, and pay them out of Panchayat funds.

Panchayat Functions

A long list of 37 functions has been enumerated in the Act, including cleansing and lighting of streets; sanitation and conservancy of the Panchayat area; taking of curative and preventive measures in times of epidemics; construction, maintenance and repair of public wells, tanks, etc.; maintenance of records relating to population census; improvement of communications and drains; maintaining a Village Volunteer Force for watch and ward; remodelling of the village; prevention of fragmentation of holdings; opening and regulating of burial and cremation grounds; construction and maintenance of places for the storage of cowdung, oil cakes and other manures and regulating their collection, removal and disposal; registration of births and deaths; looking after hospitals and dispensaries; regulation of *melas, hats,* cattle-pounds, *serais*. The Panchayat is also required to look after primary (basic and pre-basic) education, and establishment and maintenance of a library, reading room, club or other places of recreation and games, to encourage village sports and to establish a public radio set. The Panchayats can also take steps for the promotion and encouragement of cottage industries and improvement of agriculture and agricultural stock, and maintenance of model farms. The Rural Panchayats are empowered to open and regulate co-operative societies, model villages, sales and purchase depots, and a trading organisation[1].

A Panchayat may, in accordance with rules made in this behalf, enter into a contract in respect of its area with the Government to collect all or any class of tax or revenue or fee or dues payable to the Government on being allowed a prescribed percentage of collection charges.

Panchayats And Co-operative Farming

Another far-reaching provision of the Assam Panchayat Act deserves special mention. This relates to the introduction of co-operative farming. By previous agreement among the persons of the whole or compact part of its area, a Panchayat can introduce co-operative farming and make rules for them. Such farms can also be created if two-thirds of the population of the Panchayat area agree to co-operative farming. When such co-operative farming is introduced, the Panchayat can take possession of such area and the owner of the land, if he does not agree to join the co-operative farm, shall be entitled only to a reasonable rent to be determined by the Panchayat.

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[1] With regard to these functions the following sections of Assam Rural Panchayat Act would be read with interest :

Section 37 : A Panchayat may, subject to such rules as may be prescribed, maintain in co-operation with the Government Departments one or more trading organisations for the promotion of cottage industries, sale of raw materials and marketing of the finished products, and sponsor rural co-operative organisations for the provision of credit, savings and banking and may require residents of the Panchayat area to make use of such organisations.

Section 38 : A Panchayat may require professional or casual weavers, spinners and other craftsmen to form into unions and may have control over them, by making rules and regulations of such unions. It may also help these unions by granting subsidies and offering markets for the finished goods.

Panchayats Finances

The Assam Rural Panchayats Act directs the State Government to set up a fund called the Assam Rural Development Fund, which has to be used for the furtherance of the purposes of the Act. A fund called the Sub-Divisional Rural Development Fund is also created at the sub-divisional level. The Panchayats get an equitable allotment from this fund for carrying out the provisions of the Act. Every Panchayat also has a Panchayat Fund. To this fund are credited taxes, fees and cesses levied for the filling of suits and criminal cases before Panchayati Adalats; fines, costs recovered on account of execution of works, contributions from Government or other sources, and sale proceeds of property vested in the Panchayat. Panchayats are further empowered to levy a tax on land revenue at the rate of one anna per rupee, a tax on uncultivated cultivable land, buildings, marriages, health, water, firewood, education, cattle, boats, cycles and carts. Panchayats can also levy a labour tax involving the rendering of manual labour to it by able-bodied male persons between 18 and 40 years of age. No one, however, is to be made to render manual labour for more than 36 days in a year or more than three days at a stretch. Persons who do not want to pay tax in manual labour are required to pay an amount equal to the wages of double the units of labour at the rate prescribed. In case the owner of a wasteland does not utilise it himself within a specified period, the Panchayats can control it and utilise revenue realised from it. Panchayats can similarly control public fisheries within their jurisdiction. The sale proceeds of all dust, dirt, dung or refuse collected by its employees, and gifts and loans received are credited to the Panchayat Fund. The Panchayat Funds are to be audited once every year.

Control And Supervision

The Panchayats are placed under the supervision and control of the district and sub-divisional administrative and revenue heads and as such the village officers of these departments act under the directions of the overall administrative head. There is a provision under Section 122 of the said Act for Co-ordination Board now replaced by Rural Development Board and the activities of the Panchayats with regard to public health, education, etc., are co-ordinated with those at Government level.

There is no separate Panchayat department so called, but there is a Rural Development Department mainly organising Panchayats and other self-help works. In the Headquarters there is the Secretary of the Department who is also the Director. Under him there is a Panchayat Officer to assist him in the implementation of the Panchayat Act. At the district and sub-divisional level there are Development Officers in each plains sub-division for general supervision and checking up the activities of the Panchayats, as subordinate officers to the Deputy Commissioners and Sub-Divisional Officers. Powers of the latter are to be delegated under Section 126 to the Development Officers. Each Development Officer is assisted by one Rural Development Inspector. The Government have full power of superseding a Panchayat.

There is also a Local Board for each sub-division established under Assam Local Self-Government Act, 1915. On the application of the Assam Rural Panchayat Act in any particular area, the operation of the Assam Local Self-Government Act is partially withdrawn in conformity with the provision of Section 142 of the Assam Rural Panchayat Act from that area. The Rural Panchayats and Local Boards pursue the same objective in respect of their own areas. There is provision for joint committees of these two local bodies for any particular objects, if so desired.

Judicial Aspect

The State Government can establish a Panchayati Adalat for each Rural Panchayat and invest it with judicial powers, and can withdraw it if it is considered desirable. Once the Government direction is received, the members of the Panchayat are required to elect five persons to act as members of the Panchayati Adalat. Such members may or may not be members of the Panchayat, but they cannot be members of the Panchayat Cabinet. No member of a Panchayati Adalat can be less than 35 years in age. A legal practitioner or a pleader's clerk cannot also occupy the position. The term of Panchayati Adalat membership is for 3 years. They are to elect a Chairman. The Act lays down the powers of the Panchayati Adalat, the Sections of the Indian Penal Code which they can try, the procedure for trials, etc. Offences under the Cattle Trespass Act, and such other offences under any other enactment, declared by the State Government to be cognizable by such Adalat can also be tried. The law courts are debarred from taking cognizance of offences coming within the jurisdiction of the Panchayats. The Panchayati Adalats have no powers to imprison anybody and cannot impose a fine of more than Rs. 250. They can also award compensation if the accused has been wrongly implicated in a case. The Adalat cannot revise or alter its judgement once it has been delivered. There is no appeal against a Panchayati Adalat judgement. The Senior Judge, however, is empowered to set aside the conviction of the Panchayati Adalat if he is convinced that it has misused or enhanced its powers. If one of the parties to a suit dies during the pendency of a suit, a legal representative can appear for him before the Panchayati Adalat.

Village Councils In Lushai And Garo Hills

With a view to enabling the tribes in the Lushai Hills to have their own village administration governed through Village Councils, the Assam Government published in April 1953 the Lushai Hills District Village Councils Bill. The object was to maintain with certain safeguards the village autonomy which most villages in the vast Lushai area had already been enjoying. Administration through Village Councils where they had been in existence had been quite successful. The people of the Hills, mostly either Lushais or Mizos, were admirably adapted to the system. An explanation to the Bill said that the tribal chiefs had thus far held an unchallenged position. They were vested with wide powers which had at times been misused, resulting in discontent in the villages. The Bill, therefore, sought to set up elected Village Councils which should have the powers thus far held by the chiefs. It may be recalled that the powers held by the Lushai Chiefs were given to them by the British under an agreement, and the whole area was named after the Lushais, who are one of the two main sub-tribes inhabiting the district.

A year later, in May 1954, the Government decided to set up Village Councils in the Garo Hills.[1] It was decided to have Village Councils consisting of members varying from 6 to 10 in number according to the size and population of the area in each *Laskar* within the autonomous district of the Garo Hills. It was decided to have half of the members of the Council elected on the basis of adult franchise, the other half being nominated by the District Council. The *Laskar* (village judicial officer) was to be the presiding officer of the Village Council where petty cases were to be tried in accordance with Garo customary laws and usages. The Village Councils were also directed to take active interest in the execution of various development schemes.

Progress Record Of Panchayats

Following the enactment of the Assam Rural Panchayats Act, the Government of Assam decided to cover the entire State by forming 720 Panchayats in 5 years. The establishment of Panchayats was started in 1949, and by 1953-54, 94 Rural Panchayats were established in the State, as shown below :

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[1] Assam Tribune, 11.5.54.

1949-50	.. ..	15
1950-51	.. ..	14
1951-52	.. ..	22
1952-53	.. ..	31
1953-54	.. ..	12
	Total ..	94

These 94 Panchayats comprised 470 Primary Panchayats. As stated earlier, the establishment of Panchayats was included in the Rural Development Scheme, the cost of which was proposed to be met from financial assistance from the Government of India under its Post-War Development Schemes. In 1950, as an anti-inflation measure, these grants were suspended by the Government of India. This temporarily crippled the activities in Assam. The State Government, however, in 1951, decided to include the scheme in the First Five-Year Plan, and the original estimate of Rs. 10 crore expenditure in 5 years was ultimately reduced to Rs. 40 lakhs in 5 years. By 1953-54, however, the State Government spent Rs. 70 lakhs for Rural Development Schemes, out of which Rs. 38,73,000 were spent on Panchayats. As the cost of subsidy for the existing Panchayats alone was estimated in 1953-54 at Rs. 16,74,000 for the remaining years, no provision was made by the State Government for the formation of any new Panchayat during 1954-55.

Upto 1953-54, the Panchayats in Assam did commendable work. They erected office buildings, constructed roads with culverts and bridges, sank tube wells and ring wells, and took other steps for the development of agriculture. Some built buildings for cottage industries such as weaving, spinning, sericulture, etc. Some others constructed buildings for dispensaries, maternity wards and veterinary homes. The total value of works done has been estimated as follows :

1.	Buildings in Panchayats at an average cost of Rs. 6,000 each.	Rs. 3,00,000
2.	234 wells and tanks at an average cost of Rs. 1,000 each.	Rs. 2,34,000
3	1,510 miles of road at an average cost of Rs. 1,000 per mile.	Rs. 15,10,000
4.	46,078 Rft. of bridges and culverts at an average cost of Rs. 100 per Rft. ..	Rs. 46,07,800
	Total ..	Rs. 66,51,800

Besides these, many Panchayats started model farms using fertilizers, compost manure, improved seeds, etc., and also took steps to popularise the Japanese method of rice cultivation. Some Panchayats started pisiculture by reclaiming old tanks or converting small *beels* and pools into fisheries. By taking to sericulture, weaving and other cottage industries, some Panchayats added to their income. They also managed well the educational institutions in the villages placed under their care and even started some new institutions. The figures given above estimate the value of the total work executed by the Panchayats at Rs. 66,51,800, the actual Government contribution being only Rs. 38,73,000. Out of this amount, 10 per cent were still in the Reserve Fund, besides other unspent amount. From this it is obvious that Panchayats got considerable work executed on self-help basis, through free labour, donations, etc.

Defects And Shortcomings

The working of Panchayats till 1953-54, however, revealed certain defects and shortcomings. The Government had promised subsidy for 5 years, after which Panchayats were expected to become self-sufficient, but very few had taken steps in that direction. There also was apparent a lot of overlapping in the functions of the Panchayats and the Local Boards, particularly in such matters as administration of public ferries, schools, dispensaries, big *hats*, etc. In order to obviate these difficulties, a Rural Panchayat Amendment Act was passed in 1952, whereby public ferries, schools, hospitals, big *hats* (i.e., *hats* with a revenue over Rs. 3,000 on April 1, 1952), the *bazaars* and tolls of bridges were re-transferred to the Local Boards, and the Panchayats were to be paid only a share out of the revenues from these sources. This brought in a storm of protest from all Panchayats, as their revenues were thus depleted. Further, in spite of the wide powers of taxation conferred by the Assam Rural Panchayat Act, the Panchayats almost invariably remained averse to the idea of levying any new taxes or fees excepting those transferred from the Local Boards, such as cart taxes, cycle taxes, etc. As a result the income of the Panchayats generally was just enough to meet the establishment costs, leaving practically nothing for development activities.

It may also be mentioned that none of the Panchayats had been invested with judicial (Adalati) powers. Many of them, however, took up settlement of disputes with the consent of the parties concerned.

The Panchayat Enquiry Committee Of 1953

In order to go into the details of all these problems, the Government appointed a Panchayat Enquiry Committee in July 1953, with Shri Hirendra Chandra Chakravarty, an ex-Minister of Assam, as Chairman. The Terms of Reference of the Committee were :

(1) How to overcome the existing financial and other difficulties of the Rural Panchayats and to examine to what extent the Rural Panchayats can be made self-sufficient.

(2) To suggest modification of the present structure of the Panchayats.

(3) To examine if further amendments of the present Panchayat Act are necessary.

(4) Desirability or otherwise of investing the Rural Panchayats with powers of Adalat under Section 74 of the Assam Rural Panchayat Act so far not given to them.

(5) To examine the points of conflict between the Local Boards and the Panchayats pending formation of Union Panchayats covering the entire State thus replacing Local Boards.

(6) To suggest the desirability of any change of policies for concentrated formation of Panchayats in selected sub-divisions to replace the present policy in having Panchayats in scattered areas in each sub-division.

(7) Any other matter the Committee may deem proper to look into.

In August 1953, the Committee issued a questionnaire, and later undertook a tour of Assam, visiting in all 17 Panchayats. In its Report, submitted in 1954, the Panchayat Enquiry Committee recommended that the subsidy given by the Government for development purposes should not be discontinued after 5 years, as provided in the Act. This is essential till such time that the Panchayats become financially self-sufficient through taxation, which will be easier to take when the entire State will be covered by Panchayats. The Committee also recommended that the present area of Rural Panchayat should be reduced. At present it extends to several Primary Panchayats spreading over very big areas, sometimes comprising an area of 30 to 40 square miles. A Rural Panchayat should not have less than 5 and more than 15 Primary Panchayats. The size of a Primary Panchayat should not ordinarily be more than 10 square miles. The life of Rural and Primary Panchayats should be raised from 3 to 5 years. In regard to Panchayati Adalats, the Committee was of the opinion that these powers should be given with great caution. The members of the Adalat should be appointed by the Government and not elected as provided in the Act.

TABULAR REPRESENTATION VII

No. of Villages and Panchayats, etc.	Legislation passed	Amendments	Village Panchayats	
			How Constituted	Powers in village management
Total No. of Villages) 25,327 No. of Panchayats) N.A. Villages covered by Rural Panchayats) 3,663	Assam Rural Panchayat Act, 1948.	Amended under Assam Rural Panchayat Act, 1952.	Rural Panchayats are formed for a population of 20,000 to 25,000 people. Each Rural Panchayat is divided into not more than five Primary Panchayats. Panchayats are formed "Mouzawise". The object is to make the Panchayat a self-sufficient unit. Election is on the basis of adult suffrage. Every Primary Panchayat elects representatives to Rural Panchayats on the basis of one for every 200 voters. Panchayats are organised by the Rural Development Deptt. Govt. has full powers of superseding Panchayats. Every Primary Panchayat shall be composed of all adults in its area. Membership is life-time. Term of office is three years and one-third of the members shall retire annually by drawing of lots. All elections under the Act are held on Joint Electorate system. No person can be a member of more than one Primary Panchayat.	Panchayats are expected to improve the condition of villages in matters of communication, education, public health, development of co-operative movement and other welfare activities. Rural Panchayats elect a President. A body of the executive council helps the President Panchayats are to look after the following things: sanitation, street-lighting, maintenance of records, curative and preventive measures during epidemics, maintaining a Village Volunteer Force for watch and ward. Remodelling of villages with proper sanction may be undertaken. May promote cottage industries and maintain a trading organisation. It may hold exhibitions of its products in co-operation with other authorities. May enter into contract with Govt. to collect local taxes. Every Primary Panchayat is to maintain a marriage register.

PANCHAYAT INSTITUTION IN ASSAM

Sources of Revenue of Panchayats	Nyaya Panchayats		Report on the working of Panchayats		REMARKS
	How Constituted	Powers	Gram	Nyaya	
Panchayats can levy taxes, Assam Govt. will have an Assam Rural Development Fund There will also be a Sub-Divisional Rural Development Fund. In every Panchayat there shall be a Panchayat Fund. This will be composed of taxes, fees and cesses levied by Panchayats, fees levied for the filing of suits and criminal cases before Panchayati Adalats, fines, cost of execution of works recovered, contributions from Govt. or other sources, sale proceeds of property vested in it, etc. Panchayat can levy tax on land revenue payable at the rate of one anna in a rupee, tax on uncultivated cultivable land, buildings, marriages, health, water rate and vehicles. Panchayats can levy a labour tax on adult male members. Panchayat may control all waste lands under its jurisdiction. Panchayats may control public fisheries.	There are no Nyaya Panchayats but there is provision for them in the Act. Panchayati Adalat will be independent of the Rural Panchayat. Panchayat Enquiry Committee has suggested that members of the Panchayati Adalat should be appointed by the Govt.	Panchayati Adalats can try some criminal cases under specified sections of the I.P.C. Offences under the cattle Trespass Act 1871, Section 34 of the Police Act 1864, and other offences made cognizable by the Court. Criminal court is not to take cognizance of offences cognizable by the Adalat. No imprisonment can be awarded and a fine of not more than Rs. 250 can be imposed. There is provision for compensation to the accused or complainant, who is not found guilty. No sentence passed by the Adalat can be revised or altered by it. There is no appeal. The Sessions Judge can set aside the conviction. Legal representatives can appear in the case of death of one of the parties to the suit.			So far, no Panchayat has been formed in the Hill districts. The Panchayat Enquiry Committee recommended that the subsidy given by the Govt. for development purposes should not be discontinued after 5 years as provided in the Act. This is essential till such time that the Panchayats become financially self-sufficient through taxation. The Committee has also recommended that the present area of a Primary Panchayat which extends over very big areas, sometimes between 30 or 40 sq. miles, should be reduced to not more than 10 sq. miles for each Primary Panchayat. A Rural Panchayat should not have less than 5 and more than 15 Primary Panchayats. In regard to the Panchayati Adalat, the Committee has recommended that these powers should be given with great care. The members of the Adalat should be appointed and not elected as provided in the Act. The life of the present Rural and Primary Panchayats should be raised from 3 to 5 years.

Assam Panchayats Make Headway

The State Government, it would appear, accepted almost all the recommendations of the Committee. According to a Shillong report[1] the Government of Assam decided to bring the entire State under Panchayat system of administration by the end of 1956. This decision involved the setting up of as many as 166 Panchayats in 1955, in addition to those already in operation. We are not aware of the exact progress made in 1955, but it is apparent that the formation of Panchayats is in stride. We have before us Press Notes No. 94 to 108, issued by the Director of Publicity, Government of Assam, dated February 18, 1956, announcing the setting up of 21 Panchayats in Dhubri, Golaghat and Dibrugarh Sub-Divisions. Thus, for example, in the twentieth Rural Panchayat of Dhubri Sub-Division, in Berakali area, there will be 10 Primary Panchayats with a total population of 28,310 persons. The area of Berakali Rural Panchayat is about 79 square miles and its estimated revenue Rs. 5,000. Again, in the twenty-third Rural Panchayat of Dibrugarh Sub-Division, in the Pub-Dhemaji Mouza area, there is a population of 10,160 persons. The area of the Pub-Dhemaji Rural Panchayat is about 90 square miles and its present estimated revenue about Rs. 1,562. Such cottage industries as weaving, sericulture, bamboo and cane works, are practised in the area.

It follows that the Panchayat experiment in Assam, taken up in right earnest by the State Government, in spite of initial difficulties and impediments, has made considerable headway and its future is undoubtedly bright. Very rightly the State's Chief Minister, Shri Bishnu Ram Medhi has said :[2] "The Panchayats already established have been greatly instrumental in implementing local schemes and self-help projects in rural areas."

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[1] **Assam Tribune,** 29 6. 55.

[2] **Assam Information** (Issued by the Director of Publicity, Assam, Shillong) Vol. VIII, Issue No. 6, 1956.

CHAPTER XIX

BOMBAY

AMONG the States of the Indian Union, Bombay is the fifth largest in area (Madhya Pradesh, 1,30,272 sq. miles, Rajasthan, 1,30,207 sq. miles, Madras, 1,27,790 sq. miles, Uttar Pradesh, 1,13,409 sq. miles), and the fourth most populous, next to Uttar Pradesh (6,32,15,742), Madras (5,70,16,002) and Bihar (4,02,25,947). The 1951 Census gives the area of the State as 1,11.434 sq. miles, with a population of 3,59,56,150. In the area that now forms Bombay State, there were 201 persons per square mile in 1921, 227 in 1931, 262 in 1941 and 323 in 1951. The State's population increased by 55 per cent between 1872 and 1941, that for the decade 1921-31 being 12.93 per cent, for 1931-41 15.60 per cent, and for 1941-51 as much as 23.22 per cent. This increase, of course, includes the population of the merged areas following integration of States after Independence and of displaced persons.

Population In Villages Of Different Sizes

As much as 68.9 per cent of the population of Bombay lives in the rural areas, in 34,227 villages. The character of the village in Bombay State is extremely varied. In the open plains the villages generally have only one village site, and constitute identifiable clusters of population living in built-up contiguous areas. In jungle areas, however, numerous hamlets may be grouped in one village. The village in such a case is a revenue village, a unit of area into which the countryside was divided for the purposes of land revenue, and not a single locality population centre. The following table[1] gives distribution of population in villages of different sizes in the State and its Natural Divisions :

TABLE 84

State and Natural Division	Population per village	No. per 1,000 of General population in villages	No. per 1,000 of Rural Population in villages with a population of			
			5,000 & over	2,000 to 5,000	500 to 2,000	Under 500
BOMBAY STATE	724	689	33	249	543	175
Greater Bombay	..	..	..	..	..	..
Bombay Gujarat Divn.	652	744	25	236	534	205
Bombay Deccan Northern Division	810	735	43	256	555	146
Bombay Deccan Southern Division	905	738	36	304	537	123-
Bombay Konkon Division	608	806	26	211	540	223

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[1] J. B. Bowman : **Census of India, 1951, Vol. IV, Bombay, Saurashtra and Cutch, Part I, Bombay, 1953; from table on p. 209.**

Thus, within Bombay State, Konkan is the most rural Natural Division. The most intensely rural districts are the Dangs (which is exclusively rural), Sabarkantha, Banaskantha, Ratnagiri and Kolaba. Ahmedabad and Poona are the least rural districts. The average population per village is 724. Small villages are generally found in forest areas or in areas where the soil is comparatively barren and infertile. Dangs district, for example, consists of scattered villages in a forest area, the average population per village being 153. 92.3 per cent of the population of the district lives in villages with less than 500 inhabitants. Kanara, another forest district, has an average of 323 inhabitants per village. 38.3 per cent of the rural population lives in villages with less than 500 inhabitants. In the arid and infertile tracts of Banaskantha and Sabarkantha districts, 30.5 and 38.5 per cent of the rural population respectively lives in villages with less than 500 inhabitants. Large villages with 2,000-5,000 inhabitants are a feature of the districts of Belgaum, Satara South and Kaira, where between 38.1 and 44.2 per cent of the rural population lives in villages of these sizes, These districts, along with Sholapur and Kolhapur, are among those where the average population per village is the highest in Bombay State[1].

Agricultural Classes In The General Population

According to the Bombay Census Report, in 1951, the proportion of population returned as principally dependent on agriculture was three-fifths of the total population, namely, 61.46 per cent. Of this, Category One (cultivating owners) were 40.74 per cent, Category Two (tenants) 9.69 per cent, Category Three (agricultural labourers) 9.05 per cent, and rent-receivers a bare 1.98 per cent. The following table gives the percentage of the general population among the agricultural classes in the Natural Divisions of the State:

TABLE 85

Natural Division	Agricultural classes			
	I	II	III	IV
Greater Bombay ..	0.18	0.09	0.09	0.19
Gujarat ..	42.10	9.80	8.18	2.08
Deccan Northern ..	52.14	3.91	11.07	1.98
Deccan Southern ..	44.27	10.61	15.15	3.21
Konkan ..	28.29	29.73	5.08	1.60

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[1] The proportion of population per village to the number of villages of different sizes is not given for Bombay State, but in the Census Zone of Bombay, Saurashtra and Kutch, only 18.1 per cent of the rural population lived in small villages with less than 500 inhabitants. More than half the rural population, 55 per cent, lived in medium-sized villages with a population of 500 to 2,000. The remaining 26.9 per cent lived in villages with 2,000 or more inhabitants. (Bowman : Ibid, p. 20).

The Deccan Northern Division has the highest percentage of owner-cultivators (52.14), whereas the highest percentage of tenants is to be found in the Konkans (29.73). Agricultural labourers are most numerous, 15.15 per cent, in Deccan Southern Division.

Agricultural Classes In The Rural Population

We will now see the various agricultural classes as percentages of the rural population. The following table[1] gives the livelihood pattern for per 10,000 of rural population in Bombay State and the Natural Divisions :

TABLE 86

State and Natural Division	No. per 10,000 of rural population belonging to Livelihood Class					
	I	II	III	IV	Total agricultural classes	Total non-Agricultural
BOMBAY STATE	5,526	1,304	1,175	216	8,221	1,779
Greater Bombay	..	..	..	..	..	..
Gujarat	5,423	1,230	1,045	216	7,914	2,086
Deccan Northern	6,551	471	1,322	204	8,548	1,452
Deccan Southern	5,428	1,260	1,743	318	8,749	1,251
Konkan	3,369	3,530	587	148	7,634	2,366

The proportion of owner cultivators is highest in the rural population of Deccan Northern Division (65.51 per cent), followed by Deccan Southern (54.3 per cent), Gujarat (54.2 per cent), and Konkan (33.7 per cent). Among the districts, the highest percentages of owner-cultivators are to be found in Dangs and Panch Mahals, 87.4 and 76.3 per cent, respectively. The highest percentage of Livelihood Class II, the tenants, is to be found in the Konkan (35.3), followed by Deccan Southern (12.6), Gujarat (12.3), while in Deccan Northern only 4.7 of the rural population belonged to this category.

As for Livelihood Class III, the agricultural labourers, in Deccan Southern Division they were 17.4 per cent of the rural population, in Deccan Northern 13.2, in Gujarat 10.5 and in Konkan only 5.9 per cent. These figures are very much lower than those returned by the 1931 Census. This is attributed by Bowman to the faulty definition of this category in the 1931 enumeration. Bowman, however, thinks that in the 1951 Census, the bias was towards returning oneself as owner-cultivator, even when he possessed the tiniest bit.

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[1] Ibid, based on table on page 216.

Livelihood Pattern Of The Agricultural Classes

We will now see the relative proportions of the four agricultural livelihood classes in the total agricultural population. The following table[1] gives agricultural classes per 1,000 of general population and the number of each class in 10,000 persons of all agricultural classes in Bombay State and the Natural Divisions :

TABLE 87

State and Natural Division	Agricultural classes per 1,000 persons of general population	Number per 10,000 persons of all agricultural classes			
		I	II	III	IV
BOMBAY STATE ..	615	6,629	1,577	1,472	322
Gujarat	622	6,774	1,576	1,316	334
Deccan Northern ..	691	7,546	566	1,602	286
Deccan Southern ..	732	6,045	1,448	2,068	439
Konkan	647	4,372	4,594	786	248

As much as 75.5 per cent of the agricultural classes in Deccan Northern Division belong to Class I. In fact, their proportion is more than 60 per cent in all other Divisions except Konkan. This in fact is the only division where Livelihood Class II, that is, the tenant cultivators, exceed the owner-cultivators, being 45.9 per cent of all the agricultural classes. The corresponding figures for Deccan Northern and Gujarat Division are 5.7 and 15.8 respectively.

The Agricultural Labourers

As for agricultural labourers, the Census records a low ratio for them in all Divisions except Deccan Southern, where they constitute 20.7 per cent of the agricultural population. Their proportion is highest in East Khandesh district, being 29.9 per cent of the agricultural classes. Broach, Dharwar and Surat districts come next, the corresponding figures being 28.7, 26.2 and 23.9 per cent respectively.

In Bombay State also the figures for the agricultural labourer class given by the Agricultural Labour Enquiry are different from the Census returns[2]. The low proportion of the agricultural labour population in Bombay is attributed by Bowman to the existence of the ryotwari system in Bombay State. This, however, cannot be treated as convincing. It is widely accepted that in course of time this system developed all the evils of the zamindari system, its attendant rack-renting and proletarianisation of the rural masses. We have seen how, in spite of this ryotwari system, Madras State has returned a high proportion of the agricultural labourers. If anything, the low proportion of this Livelihood Category IV in the agricultural population of Bombay State may be attributed to the progressive tenancy legislations of the Bombay Government.

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[1] Ibid, based on the table on pp. 228-229.

[2] As would be evident, this difference between the Census and the Labour Enquiry returns is common in the case of all States. The comments of Bowman on this would be found interesting : "......mixed means of livelihood are far from uncommon, and....work as an agricultural labourer was a very important declared means of livelihood in the case of earning dependents belonging to the agricultural livelihood classes." And again: "Many cultivators of unowned land (Livelihood Class II) and agricultural labourers (Livelihood Class III) have also land of their own, and a man who might appear to an investigator to be principally dependent on agricultural labour at an Agricultural Labour Enquiry might at the general population census return himself as an owner-cultivator (Class I). Having regard to these considerations, the consistency of the conclusions to be drawn from the results of both the Census and the Agricultural Labour Enquiry seems more remarkable than the differences." (Ibid, p. 51).

The General Village Survey of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry gives the following[1] classification of families in the 55 villages of the State which it surveyed :

TABLE 88

Zone	No. of villages	Population	Total No. of families	Average size of family	No. of Agricultural families			
					Owners	Tenants	Agricultural workers	Total
I	20	5,568	1,065	5.2	1,481	782	504	2,767
II	9	4,349	850	5.3	605	64	274	943
V	8	7,799	1,467	5.3	559	74	154	787
III	9	5,761	1,239	4.6	681	238	368	1,287
IV	9	17,687	3,479	5.1	534	445	171	1,150
Total	55	41,164	8,100	5.1	3,860	1,603	1,471	6,934

Agricultural owners constituted 47.6 per cent of the total number of families, the tenants 19.8 per cent and the agricultural labourers 18.2 per cent.

The General Family Survey of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry, which surveyed 8,069 families in Bombay State, returned almost similar proportion of different classes—agricultural owners 49.5 per cent, tenants 20.1 per cent, and agricultural labourers 18.5 per cent. The caste composition is as follows : Of the 8,069 families, 751 or 9.3 per cent were scheduled castes or tribes, 1,007 or 12.5 per cent aboriginals and 130 or 1.6 per cent backward classes; 61.81 families belonged to other classes. Nearly 40 per cent of the scheduled castes and 50 per cent of the aboriginals were cultivators, the remainder being agricultural or non-agricultural workers or following petty trades.

Size Distribution Of Agricultural Holdings

The Census of landholdings conducted by the Land Reforms

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[1] Agricultural Wages in India, Vol. I, Op. cit., p. 83.

Division of the Planning Commission gives the following account of landholdings classified according to area owned :

TABLE 89

S. No.	Grade of Holdings (Ordinary acres)	Area owned	
		No. of holdings	Area
1.	upto 1 acre	7,82,006	4,30,927
2.	1.0 to 2.5	8,14,488	14,42,704
3.	2.5 to 5.0	9,61,970	32,07,465
4.	5.0 to 7.5	5,63,642	34,86,171
5.	7.5 to 10.0	3,97,276	34,28,942
6.	10.0 to 12.5	2,73,428	29,41,147
7.	12.5 to 15.0	2,10,388	29,08,556
8.	15.0 to 17.5	1,60,343	26,17,964
9.	17.5 to 20.0	1,20,099	23,49,013
10.	20.0 to 25.0	1,70,585	38,40,817
11.	25.0 to 30.0	1,11,966	31,28,175
12.	30.0 to 35.0	75,983	20,23,822
13.	35.0 to 40.0	53,989	20,03,705
14.	40.0 to 45.0	40,810	17,32,095
15.	45.0 to 50.0	28,623	13,55,924
16.	50.0 to 60.0	36,312	19,79,026
17.	60.0 to 75.0	28,407	18,36,088
18.	75.0 to 100.0	20,287	17,34,053
19.	100.0 to 150.0	12,472	14,88,441
20.	150.0 to 200.0	3,648	6,51,663
21.	200.0 to 300.0	21,514	6,20,744
22.	300.0 to 500.0	1,187	4,44,336
23.	500.0 to 1,000.0	512	3,68,160
24.	Above 1,000.0	222	5,07,348
	Total	47,60,187	4,65,27,288

It follows that about one-third of the total number of holdings are 2.5 acres and less and occupy only one-twentyfifth of the total area of holdings. The estimate of the size distribution of cultivator's holdings as given by the General Family Survey of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry is shown in Table 91 [1] (p.p. 464-465).

It would be seen that 5,230 families of the sample villages occupied an area of 50,524.0 acres, the average size being 9.66 acres. The holdings of agricultural workers were the smallest, with an average size of 3.72 acres, as against 4.60 for non-agriculturists, 11.69 for agricultural landowners and 8.76 acres for tenants. The cumulative frequencies of important groups with the average size of holding would be found in the following table.[1]

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[1] **Rural Man-Power and Occupational Structure, Op. cit., p. 80.**

TABLE 90

Size of groups	Commulative frequencies	Percentage to total	Average size of holding (Acres)
Under 5 acres ..	.. 2,475	47.32	1.98
Under 10 acres ..	.. 3,597	68.78	3.60
Under 25 acres ..	.. 4,788	91.55	6.54
Under 50 acres ..	.. 5,118	97.86	8.85
Under 100 acres ..	.. 5,218	99.77	9.35

It follows that 47.32 per cent of the holdings were below 5 acres. 13.31 per cent of the holdings were below 1 acre and 31.57 per cent below 2.5 acres. These 31.7 per cent of the total number of holdings comprised a bare 3.82 per cent of the total holdings area. The maladjustment is obvious.

Progressive Bombay

In the course of his tour of Karnataka in the second week of April 1956, Prime Minister Nehru called Bombay as the most progressive State of the Indian Union. The test will hold good in the matter of Village Panchayats as well. A Panchayat legislation is on the Statute Book of the State since 1933. And the Government leadership in the State has always shown a keen awareness of Panchayat problems and has done much to encourage it. Inaugurating the first conference of the officers of the District Development Boards at Bombay on July 10, 1953, Bombay's Chief Minister, Shri Morarji Desai, said that the success of democracy in India depended on the success of Village Panchayats as they constituted its very foundation. He added that if democracy was to succeed, they must strengthen the Village Panchayats and make the rural population stronger.[2]

The British Government had attempted a revival of Panchayats in the State as early as 1920, but it hardly met with any success.[3] In 1939, the Congress Ministry then in power introduced far-reach-

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[1] Ibid, p. 81.

[2] What 'Bombay Government Did and Said, Issued by Director of Publicity, Bombay) July-September, 1953, p. 113.

[3] Shri Y. B. Chavan, Bombay's Minister for Local Self-Government, writing in the Republic Day Number, 1955, of **The People's Raj** (Issued by the Director of Publicity, Bombay—Vol. VIII, Nos. 43-44), says : "The Panchayats established under the Act of 1920 were merely a pale shadow of the glorious institutions that flourished in the villages in the earliest times. They were not fully representative, their powers were limited and their finances were meagre and fluctuating, and there was no provision for regular and substantial financial aid from Government. Under the Act of 1920, Panchayats were set up only in selected villages and over considerable areas they were altogether unknown". (p. 27).

TABLE

Size of holdings	HOLDER'S FAMILY			
	Agricultural Ownership		Agricultural Tenancy	
	No.	Area (Acres)	No.	Area (Acres)
1	2	3	4	5
Under 1 acre	297	173.10	152	91.77
1 acre and under 2.5 acres ..	478	765.07	221	363.86
2.5 acres and under 5 acres ..	439	1,609.88	235	846.21
5 acres and under 7.5 acres ..	392	2,409.12	183	1,130.86
7.5 acres and under 10 acres ..	263	2,274.73	165	1,437.06
10 acres and under 25 acres ..	799	12,411.35	312	4,783.36
25 acres and under 50 acres ..	259	8,704.74	62	2,005.59
50 acres and under 100 acres ..	85	5,450.79	14	945.41
100 acres and above	11	1,547.52	1	172.80
All sample villages ..	3,023	35,346.31	1,345	11,776.92
Average size of holdings ..	..	11.69	..	8.76

Note :—Figures within brackets are percentages to total.

ing amendments in the Bombay Village Panchayats Act of 1933. It, however, soon after resigned, and the Advisers' Regime which followed showed no enthusiasm for implementing the reforms that were introduced, with the result that no progress was registered in the field of Panchayat administration. The question of revitalising the Village Panchayats was taken up in right earnest again when the popular Government came into power in 1946. And during the last nine years, a great deal of vigorous work has been done in the State to place village local self-government on a sound footing. From 1,400 in April 1946, the number of Village Panchayats steadily increased to 3,825 in March 1951, to 5,261 in 1952 and 5,950 at the end of June 1954.

Constitution Of Panchayats

The Village Panchayats Act of 1933 was later amended in 1947, 1949 and 1950. Under Section 4(1) of the Bombay Village Panchayat Act, 1933, it is obligatory on Government to establish a Village Panchayat in every village with a population of 2,000 and above. Villages with a population of less than 2,000 may, at the discretion of the Government, also have Village Panchayat. In the case of villages having a population between 1,000 and 2,000, the Government has decided that Village Panchayats should be established only

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OCCUPATION				No. of Holdings	Area (Acres)
Agricultural Labour		Non-Agricultural			
No.	Area (Acres)	No.	Area (Acres)		
6	7	8	9	10	11
184	92.66	63	32.24	696 (13.31)	389.77 (0.79)
207	324.70	49	79.03	955 (18.26)	1,532.66 (3.03)
104	363.17	46	151.39	824 (15.75)	2,970.65 (5.88)
52	309.41	24	139.41	651 (12.45)	3,988.80 (7.89)
26	222.76	17	149.06	471 (9.01)	4,083.61 (8.08)
60	893.08	20	282.88	1,191 (22.77)	18,370.68 (36.36)
5	164.72	4	140.06	330 (6.31)	11,015.11 (21.80)
..	..	1	56.20	100 (1.91)	6,452.40 (12.77)
..	..	..	..	12 (0.23)	1,720.32 (3.40)
638	2,370.50	224	1,030.27	5,230 (100.0)	50,524.00 (100.0)
..	3.72	..	4.60	..	9.66

if there is a spontaneous genuine demand for them. The Government had decided not to establish Village Panchayats in villages having a population of less than 1,000 unless 2 or 3 villages with a total population of not less than 1,000 agreed to form group Village Panchayats. Group Village Panchayats are also formed of villages having a population of 1,000 and more if people of the villages concerned agree to form such group Village Panchayats.

Every person who has attained the age of 21 years and who ordinarily resides in a village is entitled to vote at the election. Elections are held through the system of secret ballot. The area of Village Panchayat is divided into wards each of which elects one or more members. Certain provisions of the Representation of the People Act which proved very satisfactory at the time of the 1951 General Elections have been incorporated in the Bombay Village Panchayats Act. The Act has also been amended extending the normal term of office of Village Panchayat members to 4 years in order to give sufficient time to the Village Panchayat Committee to implement its programme within that period.

If for any reason the election does not result in the return of the required number of qualified persons willing to take office, the standing committee of the District Local Board is required within eight weeks from the date on which the names of elected members are published in the prescribed manner by the Collector to appoint the required number of persons, these being those who would have been qualified to be elected. If the standing committee of the District Local Board fails to make all or any of such appointments within the time specified, the Collector is required to make such appointments, and the persons so appointed shall be deemed to have been duly elected.

Powers And Duties Of Panchayats: Panchayat Staff

The powers and duties of the Panchayats are laid down in Sections 26 and 26-A of the Bombay Village Panchayat Act, 1933. Supply of water, cleansing of public road, construction, maintenance and repairs of public roads, sanitation, lighting of the village are the main amenities which are generally provided by Village Panchayats. Except communication, other welfare activities, viz., education, development of co-operative movement, etc., are not provided in the Bombay Village Panchayats Act. Education and Public Health are the responsibilities of District School Boards and District Local Boards which are given financial assistance by the State Government.

The President, who is called the Sarpanch, is elected by the elected members of the Panchayat from among themselves. The executive officer, who is called the Secretary, is appointed under Section 33 of the Act by the Village Panchayat. The conditions of service, etc., are laid down in the rules called the Bombay Village Panchayat Secretary's (Conditions of Service) Rules, 1948. An amendment of the Act has enabled smaller Panchayats situated within a distance of 3 miles to have a common secretary. The Government gives by way of grant-in-aid three-fourths of the pay and allowance of a full-time secretary and three-fourths of the pay of a part-time secretary. Under Sec. 34, a Village Panchayat is competent to appoint other servants required for carrying out the duties imposed under the Village Panchayat Act, viz., sweepers, peons on full-time or part-time basis. Except in the case of secretaries, no conditions of service have been laid down by the Government.

Government Property Vested In Panchayats

In 1950, the Government of Bombay issued orders vesting Government properties in villages in the Village Panchayats.[1] Under this order vacant lands and irregular and small pieces of open lands along roads vested fully and unconditionally in Village Panchayats. The remaining open lands, that is, sites used for playgrounds, bazars, entertainments, etc., also vested in the Village Panchayats, with the condition that they will continue to be used for the same purposes, and in case any structures of a permanent or semi-permanent type are erected, the previous permission of the District Collector should be obtained. Waste lands, that is, lands outside the village site but not earmarked for specific public purposes like threshing floor, burial or burning ground, etc., did not vest in the Panchayats but they were allowed to remove for their own use free of charge, earth or stone. Grazing lands, that is, lands outside the village site, but assigned specifically for grazing, also vested in the Panchayats, subject to the condition that they are maintained in good condition, no sale or other transfer is done by the Panchayat without the previous sanction of the Collector, and no villager is prevented from grazing his cattle provided he pays grazing fees, if any, fixed by the Panchayat. Public roads and streets vesting in the Revenue Department also vested in the Panchayats, subject to their being kept in good condition. Trees along public roads and streets other than those in charge of the Public Works Department or belonging to the Government within the village site also vested in the Panchayats. Trees on vacant lands which have vested in the Panchayats were transferred to them. Panchayats were forbidden from selling or cutting them but they were authorised to sell their fruits and other products and retain the sale proceeds. Proceeds derived from the sale of dead or fallen trees were also made over to the Panchayats.

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[1] What Bombay Government Did and Said, April-June 1950, pp. 207-208.

Control And Supervision

The duties of the Village Panchayat and of the Administrative and Revenue Officers called *Patils* and *Talatis* are different. They have nothing in common. The Village Panchayat has no duties to perform except those laid down in Section 26 and 26-A of the Village Panchayat Act. The Collector exercises control over the Village Panchayat as laid down in Section 94; the Government has appointed special officers for Village Panchayats of the *Mamlatdar* and *Mukhtiyar* grade and also Honorary Organisers whose duties are to guide and advise Village Panchayats and to foster their growth. The Government has also appointed three Divisional Directors of Local Authorities for the 3 Divisions of the State who exercise the same powers, statutory and non-statutory, which the former Revenue Divisional Commissioners were exercising in relation to local bodies. In addition, they undertake extensive tours to study the local institutions and adopt measures to tone up their administration. The Government has also issued instructions that the Government Revenue Officers, who are constantly visiting villages, should keep themselves in contact with the members of the Village Panchayats and villagers, study the administration of Village Panchayats and advise what measures they should take so that they may be enabled to show improvement in their administration and finance.

There is no separate Department exclusively for Village Panchayats but there is a separate Department called the Local Self-Government Department for all local bodies, viz., Corporations, Boroughs and District Municipalities, District Local Boards, Village Panchayats, and Notified Area Committees.

The powers to check and supervise the activities are laid down in Chapter XI of the Bombay Village Panchayat Act and they are exercised by the Collector. The Commissioner(now called Director of Local Authorities) and the Government have power to dissolve or supersede a Village Panchayat under Section 102 of the Act. When a Village Panchayat is superseded, an officer is appointed by the Government who is called an administrator.

The District Local Board looks after other villages in which there are no Village Panchayats in the matter of education, sanitation, communication, etc. The District Local Board's powers and duties are laid in the Bombay Local Boards Act, 1923; it is an authority independent of Village Panchayat but it exercises control over Village Panchayats (Vide Chapter XI of the Village Panchayat Act).

Financial Aspect

From the very beginning, from 1946, the Congress Ministry had arrived at the conclusion that unless adequate financial resources are made available to the Panchayats, and they were allowed the greatest practicable freedom in determining how their resources should be utilised for local betterment, no real progress was possible. And so additional sources of revenue were placed at the disposal of the Panchayats for effective functioning. In addition to the compulsory levy of a tax on houses and lands not subject to agricultural assessment, Village Panchayats can now levy all or any of the following taxes : (a) a pilgrim tax; (b) a tax on fairs, festivals and entertainments; (c) a tax on sale of goods; (d) octroi; (e) a tax on marriages, adoptions and feasts; (f) a tax on shops and hotels; (g) a tax on premises where machinery is run by steam, oil or electric power for any purpose other than domestic or agricultural purposes; (h) a fee on markets and weekly bazars; (i) a fee on cart-stands.

Besides the powers of taxation vested in Village Panchayats, the Government has further given direct financial assistance to the Village Panchayats. Provision has been made in the Village Panchayats Act to sanction a grant equal to 15 per cent of the land revenue or 25 per cent of the local fund cess collected in the village, whichever is greater. As already stated, the Act also provides for the payment of a grant equal to three-fourths of the salary of the secretary of a Village Panchayat.

In addition to these two statutory grants, the Government gives grants equal to 50 per cent of the expenditure incurred by the Village Panchayats on payment of dearness allowance to their staff.

Table 92 (pp. 470-471) shows the extent of financial assistance granted by the Government to Village Panchayats during the nine years ending March, 1955.

Nyaya Panchayats

Every Panchayat at its first meeting is required to elect five persons for the purpose of constituting the Nyaya Panchayat. The term of office of members of the Nyaya Panchayat is co-extensive with the term of office of members of the Panchayat. In the initial stages these Nyaya Panchayats have been invested with powers to try minor offences and settle disputes of ordinary character. The Act, however, provides that when a Nyaya Panchayat has gained experience and shown good results in its initial work, it should be conferred wider powers (Section 41). The Government reserves to itself the authority to withdraw any or all of the judicial powers conferred on a Nyaya Panchayat if it has shown incompetence in the discharge of its duties and has been guilty of abuse of its powers.

The procedures followed by the Nyaya Panchayats have been made very simple. Many unnecessary formalities have been dispensed with. Appearance of an advocate is forbidden by law. The High Court has issued necessary instructions to all subordinate courts not to entertain cases triable by Nyaya Panchayats. The trial is conducted by the Panches in the presence of the village public who are generally in the know of the facts.

Nyaya Panchayats are still in their infancy and need to be watched. They have succeeded in reducing litigation, though no detailed reports are available. According to authoritative opinion, no group differences are generally reflected in the Nyaya Panchayats.

Village Water Supply

A special feature of Bombay Panchayat Administration is the energetic steps taken by it for village water supply. Village water supply is an obligatory responsibility of a Village Panchayat. As early as 1946, the Government embarked upon a beneficent programme to provide adequate drinking water in villages with a population of 200 and above and in villages with a population of 100 and above in backward areas, where there are no such facilities. The scheme has since been extended to the areas of merged states. A

TABLE

	1946-47	1947-48	1948-49	1949-50
	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
(1) Grant-in-aid on account of pay of Village Panchayat Secretaries.	4,15,000	4,72,050	5,76,360	6,02,300
(2) Grants-in-aid equal to 15 per cent of land revenue and initial grants for starting new Village Panchayats.	11,000	15,400	14,24,805	14,66,930
(3) Grants equal to 50 per cent of expenditure incurred by Village Panchayats on payment of dearness allowance to their staff.	..	2,00,000	2,50,000	3,52,000
Total	4,26,000	6,87,450	22,51,165	24,21,230

sum of Rs. 221 lakhs was allotted by the Government for village water supply schemes for the first five years of its post-war reconstruction programme. During the period from March 1947 to March 31, 1951, in all 3,182 village water supply works were completed. Works in progress on that date totalled 1,992. The expenditure incurred on this account is as follows :

1946-47	Rs. 39.63 lakhs
1947-48	” 17.35 ”
1948-49	” 47.82 ”
1949-50	” 77.11 ”
1950-51	” 45.32 ”

By 1953, village water supply works completed reached 4,456 and 1,160 works were in progress. Till 1953, a total of Rs. 1,86,21,480 had been incurred on the works completed, and an amount of Rs. 31,22,377 was incurred on works in progress.

In special cases where it is not possible to obtain drinkable water by sinking wells, construction of *bandharas* or installation of pipe system has been undertaken. In such cases, the extent of Government assistance is 60 per cent of the estimated cost of the scheme, the balance being provided by villagers themselves or by loans from Government. Grant-in-aid equal to 60 per cent of the

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1950-51 Rs.	1951-52 Rs.	1952-53 Rs.	1953-54 Rs.	1954-55 Rs.
11,02,300	13,82,740	15,82,740	18,82,740	21,42,800
17,06,485	18,06,590	21,56,580	31,56,560	33,71,900
5,64,000	6,08,860	6,25,000	7,75,000	9,38,000
33,72,785	37,98,190	43,64,320	58,14,300	64,52,700

cost of the scheme is also paid to Panchayats desiring to have pipe water if water is not available at a reasonable distance from the village and at a reasonable depth. If, however, pipe water is desired merely for the convenience of the villages, the assistance is limited to 50 per cent of the total cost. This has provided another useful field of activity for the Panchayats and many have come forward to take advantage of the scheme.

Assistance is given to Village Panchayats constructing houses for its Harijan employees. In such cases, the Government sanctions to the Panchayat concerned a grant equal to 50 per cent of the estimated cost of the project. A large number of Panchayats are likely to take advantage of this concession.

The *Shrama-Dan* Movement

The *Shramadan* movement has also apparently caught the imagination of the villagers of the State. Reports of *shramadan* work by different villages are found in the press, both official and non-official. In Community Project and National Extension Service areas particularly, they have put in their own labour, donated materials and paid in cash for financing the various constructive and development activities. Their active initiative and collaboration have contributed to the success of the work undertaken. Upto November 1954, the total value of labour, material and cash so contributed amounted to Rs. 54,92,000 in the Project areas. The popular contribution in respect of National Extension Service blocks amounted to Rs. 14,56,390. These among them had covered 6,325 villages by the end of 1954, with an area of 19,000 square miles and a population of over 51 lakhs. We are not aware of the position of Village Panchayat organisation in these areas, which are located in Mehsana, Sabarkantha, Thana, Kolaba, Kolhapur, Belgaum, Panchmahals, Broach, Ratnagiri, Nasik, West Khandesh and Bijapur districts, but it may be assumed that the Panchayats in these areas have undoubtedly played their part in rousing the enthusiasm of the peasant population. And what is more important is that they are a good augury for the future.

Writing in *The People's Raj,* cited above, the State's Local Self-Government Minister categorically said : "Improvement in the basic units of village administration is the chief objective of the Government....The Government now proposes to take positive steps to implement a scheme according to which every village in Bombay State will be covered by proper Village Panchayat within a period of three years, if not earlier."

Proposals For Reform Of Panchayats

In November 1955, a Bill was published in the Gazette with the object of enhancing the powers of Village Panchayats so as to enable them to function more efficiently and to play a more important role as basic units of local self-government. The Bill seeks to amend and consolidate the law relating to Village Panchayats.

Some of the important features of the new Bill are the doing away of the limit of at least 2,000 population for the compulsory establishment of a Village Panchayat, adoption of the State Legislative Assembly electoral roll for the Village Panchayat elections and doing away with the property or taxation qualifications and holding elections to Panchayats by show of hands; appointment of a statutory committee for the election of candidates for the posts of secretaries to Village Panchayats and vesting powers in the standing committee of the District Local Board for the appointment and transfer of Village Panchayat secretaries; vesting all Nyaya Panchayats with powers as soon as they are constituted and appointment of a taluka committee to supervise the activities of Village Panchayats and to guide and advise them.

It has been the Government's policy to establish Village Panchayats in each and every village of the State. In order to implement this policy, Clause 4 of the Bill seeks to delete the provision regarding the limit of at least 2,000 population for the compulsory establishment of a Village Panchayat. Clause 9 provides for the appointment of an administrative committee or an administrator in case of failure to establish a Village Panchayat after the declaration of a village under Clause 4, either due to difficulty in holding elections or for any other sufficient reason. Clauses 10 to 25 relate to elections of Village Panchayats, disqualification of membership of the Panchayat and election of the Sarpanch and the Deputy Sarpanch.

Certain additional functions are proposed to be entrusted to the Village Panchayats as recommended by the Planning Commission. Improvement of agriculture, which was previously one of the discretionary duties of the Village Panchayats, is proposed to be included as an obligatory duty and making a survey as one of the discretionary duties. The organisation of voluntary labour for carrying on community works and assistance in the implementation of the land reform schemes are proposed to be included in their obligatory duties.

At present, much time lapses before a new body of Village Panchayat begins functioning. With a view to avoiding delay in calling the first meeting of a Panchayat, it is proposed, under Clause 30, to vest the power of calling the first meeting of the Panchayat in the *Mamlatdar*. Clause 34 empowers the Collector to take action against any member or Sarpanch or Deputy Sarpanch who has been guilty of misconduct or neglect of or incapacity to perform his duty or is persistently negligent in the discharge of his duties, against whom the District Local Board refuses to take action or does not take any action. It is also proposed to make a provision for appeal against the order of the District Local Board or of the Collector.

Clause 46 makes a provision enabling the Village Panchayats to allow any temporary occupation of or putting projection over public roads and sites which are vested in the Village Panchayats.

At present, a notification is to be issued by the Government conferring judicial powers on a Nyaya Panchayat and these powers are conferred in three stages. In many cases much time lapses before judicial powers are conferred on a Nyaya Panchayat. Clause 57 of the Bill, therefore, provides that judicial powers regarding suits for money due on contracts not affecting any interest relating to immovable property and suits for the recovery of movable property or for the value of such property and certain offences under the Indian Penal Code, the Cattle Trespass Act, the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, the Bombay Prohibition Act, the

TABULAR REPRESENTATION VIII

No. of villages and Panchayats, etc.	Legislation passed	Amendment	Village Panchayats	
			How constituted	Powers in Village managements
1. Total No. of villages : 36,389. 2. Total No. of V. Ps. on 30.6.'53 : 5,636. 3. 1,098 villages declared 'VILLAGES' under B. V. P. Act, 1933. 4. Obligatory on Govt. to establish V.P. in a village with a population of 2,000 and above. 5. No V. Ps. in less than 1,000 population village. 6. May be Group Panchayats of 2 or 3 villages having a total population of at least 1,000.	Bombay Village Panchayat Act, 1933.	Amendment in Sept. 1947. Bombay Act No. XIX of 1953—this was an act to amend B.D.M.A. 1901 and B. V. Ps. Act 1933. This Act to be called (1) Bombay District Municipal Village Panchayat (Amendment) Act, 1953. 2. Some modifications in B. V. P. A. 1933. 3. Slight modifications were made at several times, e.g., in 1939, 1947, 1950.	1. Adult Franchise. 2. Ordinarily residing in a village. 3. Through secret ballot. 4. V. P. divided into wards—each of which electing one or more members. 5. If required No. in election not returned within 8 weeks, standing committee of D.L. Board will appoint the required number of persons. 6. If S. Committee does not, then collector is to appoint. 7. President called "SARPANCH" elected by elected members from among themselves. 8. E. Officer called Secretary appointed under Section 33 of Act.	Given in Sec. 26 of B. V. P. Act. **Administrative.** 1. From V. funds at disposal subject to general control of D. L. Board. a) Supply of water for domestic use. b) Cleansing of public roads, drains, etc., and their construction and maintenance provided not vested in other public authority. c) Lighting, control of fairs, etc. **Discretionary Powers.** 1. Crop experiment. 2. Relief of destitute and sick. 3. Village libraries and reading room, etc. **Subject to by-laws passed by D. L. B.** V. P. shall supervise repairs to Dharmshalas, etc. Education and Health are under Section 33 of Act.

PANCHAYAT INSTITUTION IN BOMBAY

Sources of revenue of Gram Panchayats	Nyaya Panchayats		Report on the working of Panchayats		REMARKS
	How constituted	Powers	Gram Panchayats	Nyaya Panchayats	
Taxes and fees. (Stated in Section 89 of B. V. P. Act of 1933). V. P. shall levy tax on (a) occupiers and owners of houses including farm buildings (b) Occupiers and owners of land which are not subject to agricultural assessment. (c) The payment of taxes for above may be either in cash or rendering of labour and work. (d) V. P. may levy all or any of following taxes but one of these may be made compulsory : 1. Pilgrim tax. 2. Tax on fairs, festivals and entertainments. 3. Sale of goods and octroi. 4. On Shops. 5. Fee on weekly bazars, etc. **Grants and Help :** 1. Govt. pays 25% of L.F.C. and grant equal to 3|4th of salary and allowances of V. P. secretaries. 2. Govt. pays voluntary Grant equal to 50% of the expenditure. 3. Also initial grant of Rs. 100 to each V. P. and bears the entire cost of elections to V. P.	**Section 37** 1. Each Panchayat in its first meeting elects out of its members 5 persons for Nyaya Panchayats. 2. Term of the office coexistent with the terms of the members of V. Ps. 3. 3 members shall form the quorum. 4. shall have a chairman to be elected from the members of Nyaya Panchayat by themselves. 5. Secy. of V. P. shall work as the judicial clerk of Nyaya Panchayats.	**Powers are stated from Section 38 to 48 of B V. P. Act. 1933.** Same as provided in Section 40 A. N. P. may be conferred with powers to try (1) suits for money due on contracts not affecting any interest on movable property. (2) for recovery of movable property (3) for compensation for wrongfully taking movable property or injuring it (4) May fine upto Rs. 40 only.	During March 194 to March 1951, in 3,182 villages water supply works were completed. (2) Govt. allotted a sum of Rs. 221 lakhs for this work. (3) Where drinkable water is not available installation of pipe system has been undertaken. (4) Help is being given (5) V. Ps. situated in Community Projects and N. Extension areas are giving active help, in regard to public utility works.	Have lessened the burden of suits from courts. 2. Justice has become convenient for villagers.	No change is contemplated in regard to the constitution of V. Ps. Emphasis is on making Panchayat a spontaneous urge of the people. Govt. is considering how to revitalise the V. Ps. Govt. shall be paying more attention to V. Ps. in the light of the above statement.

Bombay District Taxation Act and the Bombay Primary Education Act should be exercised by a Village Panchayat on its constitution. Additional powers will be conferred on it by the Government by issue of a notification. It has been proposed to lay down that the State Government may empower Nyaya Panchayats to inflict a maximum punishment of a fine of Rs. 100.

In view of the poor conditions of people in the scheduled areas, provision has been made in the Bill for exempting lands and buildings or any class of lands and buildings in such areas from taxation by the Panchayats. At present it is compulsory for a Village Panchayat to levy a tax on all lands or buildings within the limits of the village.

Clause 113 of the Bill debars a Village Panchayat from levying a tax on professions, trades or callings and employments within its area if the District Local Board within which such Village Panchayat is included is also levying such a tax. In order to provide for an additional source of revenue to the Village Panchayats, it is proposed to levy a cess at the rate of two annas on every rupee of ordinary land revenue collected at the request of the Village Panchayat.

Panchayats And Collection Of Land Revenue

In the meantime, on April 15, 1956, the Bombay Assembly passed an official Bill to invest Village Panchayats, in selected cases, with powers to collect land revenue and to maintain the record of rights in villages.

The Bill, amending the Bombay Land Revenue Code (1879) to make provision for the new powers to Panchayats, passed through all the three stages of consideration.

Shri B. S. Hiray, Revenue Minister, who piloted the Bill, said the Bombay Government was the first in the country to adopt such a measure which he described as a "bold step" in the direction of decentralization of administrative powers. To begin with, the work would be entrusted to two or three Village Panchayats in a taluka. The Government would very carefully watch the experiment and was "serious and anxious" to make it a success. After a few years other Village Panchayats would be gradually brought in so that the work of land revenue collection would be entrusted to Village Panchayats in almost all villages.

CHAPTER XX

BIHAR

ADDRESSING the fourth Conference of the Bihar State Panchayat Parishad at Isri in Hazaribagh district in April 1955, the President, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, paid the following tribute to Village Panchayat work in the State :[1] "The remarkable progress which Panchayat Raj made in the State since 1948 was evidence of the care the Government had bestowed on the Panchayats. Against a target of 12,000 Panchayats, which had to be established by the end of the Second Five-Year Plan period, Bihar was going to achieve two-thirds of it by the end of 1955-56. By the end of 1958, the entire State would be covered by Gram Panchayats. It would be a great achievement which, apart from resulting in material prosperity and all-round development of the countryside, would also provide the best means of training the village people in self-help through self-governance."

Pressure Of Population: Predominant Rural Character

Bounded on the north by Nepal and the Darjeeling district of West Bengal, on the south by Orissa, on the east by West Bengal, and on the west by Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, this State has from earliest times played a notable role in India's history and has been the pioneer in many philosophical and cultural thoughts and ideas which later influenced the entire country. The Ganges flowing slightly to the north of Central Bihar, divides the State into two distinct zones to the north and south of the river. The total area according to the 1941 Census, including the merged states of Seraikhela and Kharsawan, was 70,368 square miles and the total population 3,65,45,575 of which 19,62,000 or 5.33 per cent was urban and 3,45,83,575 or 94.67 per cent was rural. This predominantly rural character of the State is also shown by the 1951 Census, which returned a population of 4,02,25,947 of which 26,95,990 or 6.9 per cent was urban and 3,75,29,957 or 93.1 per cent was rural. Total number of inhabited towns and villages in the State is 71,941. The total number of villages in the State is 71,318. Bihar is a very thickly populated State. The density of population in 1941 was 519.1, and in 1951 it was 571.6 per square mile. Thus, the density of population registered a considerable increase in a decade.

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[1] Searchlight, 25.4.'55.

Population variation in the State in the course of 50 years, from 1901 to 1951, would be found in the following table[1]:

TABLE 93

Year	Population	Variation
1901	2,83,93,457	
1911	2,94,97,592	+ 11,04,135
1921	2,91,77,296	− 3,20,296
1931	3,25,56,239	+ 33,78,943
1941	3,65,28,119	+ 39,71,880
1951	4,02,25,947	+ 36,97,828

The net variation between 1901 and 1951 works out to 1,18,32,490, that is, more than one-fourth of the State's population in 1951. There are some areas like Saran with a density of 1,182 persons to a square mile, and Tirhut with 1,030 per square mile; in certain areas, however, in hilly Palamau and the Chota Nagpur plateau, the density is much less, 201 and 237 respectively. The pressure of population on land would be evident from the fact that per capita gross sown area in Bihar is 0.77 acre for the entire population, and 0.8 acre for rural population. With a rural population of 93.1 per cent, Bihar, along with Assam and Orissa, ranks among the most rural States of the Indian Union.

Distribution Of Villages In Districts According To Population: Agricultural Population

Table 94[2] (p. 479) gives the number of villages with less than 2,000 population in different districts.

It follows that villages of less than 500 population constitute the overwhelming majority. According to the Census of 1951,[3] about 35 million persons out of the total population of about 40 million, that is, 86 per cent of the population, are agricultural. The agricultural population in the districts would be found in Table 95[4] (p. 479).

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[1] **Census of India, 1951, Vol. V. Bihar, Part II-A—Tables (A, E, C & D Series), Patna, 1953; See Table A-II, p. 6.**

[2] **Ibid; extracted from Table A-III on pp. 12-13.**

[3] Studies of 1951 Census, presented as Part 1-A of the Census Report for each State, to the best of our knowledge (we stand subject to correction) is not available for Bihar, as in the case of other States, on which we have profusely drawn in our population study of other States. In fact, in regard to agrarian studies relating to Bihar, as Shri S. R. Bose, Director of Economics and Statistics, Government of Bihar, says: "There is great paucity of reliable statistics....Even the statistics which are collected are not always reliable and are published so late that they are of little help for practical purposes." (Quoted from **Bihar Statistical Hand-book, 1950**, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Bihar, Patna, 1951; See Introduction).

[4] **The Indian Journal of Agricultural Economics**, Vol. VIII, No. 2, August 1953; Table extracted from one occurring in S. R. Bose's article entitled "Agricultural Income and its Distribution in Bihar"; p. 40.

TABLE 94

State and District	Towns and Villages with less than 2,000 population			
	Less than 500	500-1,000	1,000-2,000	Total
BIHAR	48,425	13,846	6,484	68,755
Patna	1,102	574	344	2,020
Gaya	4,615	994	431	6,040
Shahabad	3,302	935	344	4,581
Saran	2,086	1,301	708	4,095
Champaran	1,110	763	484	2,357
Muzaffarpur	1,918	1,240	710	3,868
Darbhanga	935	857	707	2,499
Monghyr	1,383	815	594	2,792
Bhagalpur	1,460	521	225	2,206
Saharsa	435	383	276	1,094
Purnea	2,789	1,152	487	4,428
Santhal Parganas	10,524	797	170	11,491
Hazaribagh	5,202	671	210	6,083
Ranchi	2,712	944	240	3,896
Purulia	2,202	756	249	3,207
Dhanbad	893	219	78	1,190
Palamau	2,685	405	97	3,187
Singhbhum	3,072	519	130	3,721

TABLE 95

District		Population belonging to the agricultural classes (in lakhs)
Patna	..	18.7
Gaya	..	25.6
Shahabad	..	22.4
Saran	..	28.6
Champaran	..	23.6
Muzaffarpur	..	31.9
Darbhanga	..	33.6
Bhagalpur	..	23.8
Monghyr	..	23.5
Purnea	..	22.3
Santhal Pargana	..	21.3
Ranchi	..	16.7
Palamau	..	9.0
Hazaribagh	..	16.5
Manbhum	..	17.5
Singhbhum	..	11.1
TOTAL BIHAR	..	346.1

Agricultural Population By Livelihood Classes

Agricultural population in Saran is the highest and in Palamau the lowest. It would be observed that it is in Saran that the density of population is highest and in Palamau lowest. S. R. Bose gives the following break-up of this population among the different livelihood classes : [1]

TABLE 96

Livelihood Class	Persons in the Class	Percentage of total population
Category I—Cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned and their dependents. ..	22 millions	55
Category II—Cultivators of land wholly or mainly unowned and their dependents. ..	3 ,,	8
Category III—Cultivating labourers and their dependents. ..	9 ,,	22
Category IV—Non-cultivating owners and their dependents. ..	0.25 ,,	0.6

Cultivating labourers thus constitute 22 per cent of the agricultural population. The General Village Survey of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry, however, returns a much higher percentage. For this Survey, 80 villages were selected in four zones of the State. The average population per village was 656 and the average area 614 acres. The following table [2] shows the occupational classification of agricultural families in the villages selected :

TABLE 97

Zone	No. of Villages	Population	Total No. of Families	Average size of family	No. of Agricultural Families			
					Owners	Tenants	Agricultural workers	Total
I	9	9,269	1,873	5.0	173	594	740	1,507
II	22	17,274	3,165	5.5	108	1,296	1,137	2,541
III	21	10,906	1,697	6.4	48	757	554	1,359
IV	28	15,022	2,857	5.3	51	1,107	1,181	2,339
Total	80	52,471	9,556	5.5	380	3,754	3,612	7,746

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[1] Quarterly Bulletin of Statistics, Bihar (Published by Directorate of Economics and Statistics), January 1953. See Special Article by S. R. Bose entitled : "The Problem of Land Redistribution in Bihar"; p. 1.

[2] Agricultural Wages in India, Vol. I, Op. cit., p. 65.

Predominance Of Agricultural Labourers

Thus, out of the total number of 9,556 families, 7,746 or 81.1 per cent were agricultural. Among these, 3,612 families, or about 47 per cent were those of agricultural workers. The General Family Survey of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry gives the following table regarding occupational distribution of families in the 80 villages surveyed by it :

TABLE 98[1]

		Agricultural land-ownership	Agricultural Tenancy	Agricultural Labour				
				With land	Without land	Total	Total Agricultural Families	All Families
ALL SAMPLE VILLAGES	(a)	282	3,695	2,447	1,375	3,822	7,799	9,543
	(b)	1,914	13,125	13,125	5,939	19,064	43,673	53,199
	(c)	6.7	5.36	5.36	4.32	4.99	5.59	5.57

(a) Total number of families.
(b) Total number of persons in the families.
(c) Average size of family.

Thus, of the 9,543 families living in the sample villages, 7,799 or 81.7 per cent were agricultural. The percentage of agricultural families was composed of 3.0 per cent owners, 38.8 per cent tenants, 25.6 per cent agricultural workers with land and 14.3 per cent landless agricultural workers. Thus about 40 per cent were those of agricultural labourers. In Zone IV, the percentage was even higher, namely, 45.3 per cent. Of the agricultural workers' families with land (about 64 per cent possessed land), the Survey remarks : "Their holdings were so small that they resorted to agricultural labour as their main occupation."

Caste Composition: Caste & Property Differences Coincide

This same Survey has the following to say about the Caste composition of the population of the surveyed villages : "Of the 9,543 families, 491 or 5.1 per cent were Brahmins, 429 or 4.5 per cent Kshatriyas, 372 or 3.9 per cent Vaishyas, 2,210 or 23.2 per cent scheduled castes and tribes." Of the remaining, 40.3 per cent belonged to tribal and aboriginal communities and backward classes and 23.0 per cent to other classes. The agricultural landowners mostly were Brahmins and Kshatriyas, though among them too, a small percentage belonged to the agricultural labourer class, the vast majority being tenants. Agricultural labour was the main source of income of two-thirds of the families of scheduled castes and tribes. Among the backward classes, 35.2 per cent were agricultural workers, while only 1.1 per cent were agricultural landowners."[1]

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[1] Rural Man-Power and Occupational Structure, Op. cit., p. 56.

It can be said, therefore, that as in Uttar Pradesh, in Bihar also, the caste and property differences have tended to coincide. Almost always the landowning classes as also the tenants (who employ agricultural labour) belong to the so-called upper castes and the majority of the landless agricultural labourers come from the scheduled castes and other backward classes. Another Survey in a village called Dorwan (a zamindari village in sub-division Dinapur of district Patna) conducted by the Central Ministry of Labour has this to say :[2] "The agricultural labourers were mainly drawn from *chamars* and *kahars*. Of the 16 families of attached workers, 7 were *chamars* and 7 *kahars*."

Size Distribution Of Holdings

Apart from the large proportion of landless agricultural workers, Bihar has a very high proportion of very small holdings. In the system of Permanent Settlement, now abolished, there used to be hardly any records regarding size distribution of holdings. The recent Census of Landholdings and Cultivation conducted by the Land Reforms Division of the Planning Commission, however, supplies some valuable information on the subject. The Census is based on information collected from a little more than 200 villages, and may be regarded as representative of Bihar. Table 99 (p. 483) gives holdings classified according to area owned.

It follows that about 40 per cent of the holdings are up to 1 acre and occupy only one-seventeenth of the area. Holdings up to 2.5 acres number about 68 per cent of the total number of holdings and occupy only one-seventh of the total area of holdings. S. R. Bose has referred to certain sample surveys conducted earlier, and he reveals an even worse picture.[3] He has referred to three surveys. We would refer to the one conducted in 1952 by the Agricultural Statistics Department. It showed that 87 per cent of the holdings were less than 5 acres each, 10 per cent between 5 and 15 acres, and 3 per cent about 15 acres. A further split-up of the small holdings shows the distribution as given in Table 100 (p. 483).

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[1] Ibid, p. 55, 57.

[2] Report on an Enquiry into the Conditions of Agricultural Workers in Village Dorwan in Bihar State, Issued by Ministry of Labour, Government of India; Part II, para 6.

[3] Quarterly Bulletin of Statistics, Bihar, January 1953; Op. cit., p. 2.

TABLE 99

S. No.	Grades of holdings	No. of holdings (in thousand)	Area (in thousand acres)
1.	upto 1 acre	2,520.8	1,046.8
2.	1 to 2.5 acres	1,528.7	2,517.5
3.	2.5 to 5 ,,	1,088.9	3,953.4
4.	5.0 to 7.5 ,,	401.3	2,479.1
5.	7.5 to 10.0 ,,	233.1	1,923.2
6.	10.0 to 12.5 ,,	112.1	1,221.8
7.	12.5 to 15.0 ,,	56.9	779.5
8.	15.0 to 17.5 ,,	35.6	558.5
9.	17.5 to 20.0 ,,	23.2	428.5
10.	20.0 to 25.0 ,,	29.1	650.4
11.	25.0 to 30.0 ,,	11.2	302.1
12.	30.0 to 35.0 ,,	3.9	124.2
13.	35.0 to 40.0 ,,	4.1	153.2
14.	40.0 to 45.0 ,,	4.3	180.1
15.	45.0 to 50.0 ,,	1.1	49.8
16.	50.0 to 60.0 ,,	3.4	179.3
17.	60.0 to 75.0 ,,	2.6	165.0
18.	75 acres and above	1.7	333.3
Total	..	6,062.1	17,046.1

TABLE 100

Size of holdings	Percentage of total holdings
Up to ½ an acre	33.5
Between ½ and 1 acre	17.2
Between 1 and 2 acres	17.8
Between 2 and 3 acres	9.1
Between 3 and 4 acres	5.7
Between 4 and 5 acres	3.4
Total	86.7

Thus, one-third of the total holdings are of half an acre, and one-half of the entire holdings are of size not exceeding 1 acre. "Although holdings up to 5 per cent constituted more than four-fifths (87 per cent) of the total holdings, the total area comprised within these holdings formed a little less than one-third (per cent) of the entire area surveyed."

Dire Poverty Of Bihar Peasantry

These figures of authoritative Surveys leave no doubt about the dire poverty of the peasant masses of Bihar. Bose has also calculated the distribution of agricultural income among the different agricultural Livelihood Classes of Bihar.[1] The gross agricultural income per head varied from a maximum of Rs. 110 in Purnea and Manbhum to Rs. 47 in Darbhanga, with an average of Rs. 69 for the whole State. Bose has calculated Rs. 763 to be the average annual income per head of the non-cultivating rent-receiving classes. As for Livelihood Categories I and II, that is, cultivators of land owned and unowned, (whom he has classed together for purposes of calculation, "as it is not possible to estimate separately the income of cultivators with owned land and cultivators of unowned land"), Bose estimates their income as Rs. 76 per head. For cultivating labourers and their dependents, he has given the figure of Rs. 66 per head, which according to his own admission, is obviously a high estimate!

Revolutionary Traditions Of The Bihar Peasantry

The poverty of the Bihar peasantry, sometimes highly affluent and prosperous, and with great traditions of a highly developed culture and civilised existence, is today heart-rending. Yet virile and vigorous, they never accepted their fate as it was and continuously fought against their oppressors and the foreign enslavers. The tremendous revolutionary upsurge of the Bihar peasant masses during 1942 Quit India Movement is of too recent an origin to need any recital. And even today, in spite of the abolition of the Permanent Settlement, their poverty and nakedness continues, and they continuously fight against it. The Bihar tiller is now very conscious of his rights, is assertive, and this not unoften leads to agrarian violence and even murders. We have come across many such reports in the daily press in recent years. In district Purnea, for example, following Settlement Operations and consequent disputes over titles to lands, there have been almost two dozen murders and more. The Village Panchayats in the State have contributed to a very large extent in harmonising village feuds, and without them the violence might have been more intense. That is not to deny that Village Panchayats themselves not unoften express these conflicts in the village between the non-cultivating labourers and the miserable cultivators of pitiable holdings of one and two acres. These constitute the vast majority, and generally come from the lower castes and backward classes, traditionally oppressed and exploited by the upper holders, who, in the great majority of cases, hail from the so-called upper castes.

Dr. S. K. Sinha On The Role Of Panchayats

The valuable role which Village Panchayats can play in such an atmosphere, the harmony and goodwill they can establish by arousing the collective sense of the village cannot be over-emphasised. And the leaders of Bihar have always exhibited a keen awareness of this specific role of Panchayats. Addressing Seva Dal Training Camp at Rajgir, Bihar's Chief Minister, Dr. Sri Krishna Sinha said[1]: "It was in the fitness of things that the camp was started in Rajgir, hallowed by the sacred memory of Buddha, whose message of love spread not only in India, but in Burma, China, Siam, Japan and other Asiatic countries." And he called upon them "to go to the villages as messengers of love and service, and as a result of your activities, every village would be smiling with plenty and the land as a result of the improved method of agriculture would yield more crops than now. There would then be better sanitation, cleaner villages, better roads, improved wells and improved cattle and thus will be banished disease, ignorance, poverty and useless litigation".

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[1] The Indian Journal of Agricultural Economics, August 1953; Op. cit.

Constitution Of Panchayats

The Bihar Panchayat Raj Act was enacted in 1947[2]. Under this Act, a Panchayat is normally established in a village having a population of at least one thousand adult persons. Small villages situated within a radius of two miles are grouped together to constitute a single Panchayat. For administrative reasons it was decided that in North Bihar districts a Panchayat should be established on the basis of 5,000 population whereas in Chota Nagpur districts the minimum population should be 2,500.

Before a Panchayat is officially established, people of a group of villages form themselves into a Panchayat and do some constructive work, such as, repair of approach roads, making of compost pits, sockage pits, etc. The execution of constructive work done by them reflects the degree of their willingness for establishing a Panchayat. On the satisfactory execution of the constructive programme, the Panchayat is officially recognised by the Government by publication of a notification in the official Gazette and after this, all the adult members of that Panchayat elect the Mukhiya and fifteen Panches on the basis of adult suffrage. The Mukhiya is the chief executive officer and nominates his Executive Committee which consists of seven to fifteen members, depending upon the population of the Panchayat, in order to help him in the day-to-day administration of the Panchayat.

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[1] We have referred to a portion of this speech earlier, on p. 263. See Searchlight, 14.3.'50.

[2] There was an earlier legislation, namely, the Bihar and Orissa Local Self-Govt. Act of 1885, but like many British Laws, it can be placed in the category of 'dead laws'.

The principle of joint and several responsibility is followed. Each member of the Executive Committee is put in charge of a department. For instance, one member is put in charge of agriculture, the second of expansion of education, the third is made responsible for improvement of irrigational facilities, the fourth for supply of drinking water and so on, and in this way there is division of work which ensures speedy execution of schemes approved by the Executive Committee.

Out of fifteen elected Panches, one amongst them is elected as Sarpanch, and he is responsible for administering justice to the residents of the Panchayat area. The Sarpanch and Panches constitute the village judiciary.

Village Volunteer Force

A special feature of the Bihar Act is that there is a provision for enrolment of all able-bodied males of the village, between the age of 18 and 30 years, as members of the Village Volunteer Force under the command of a Chief Officer, for general watch and ward and for meeting cases of emergency, like fire, breach of an embankment or dam, outbreak of epidemic, burglary and dacoity. A set of statutory Rules, called the Village Volunteer Force Rules, has been framed, which deal with the duties, organisation, disciplinary control, award of rewards and punishment, etc., to the members of the Force.

Panchayat Functions

Gram Panchayats have to perform a number of administrative and municipal, revenue and judicial functions.

Gram Panchayats have been made responsible for the following municipal functions :

(*a*) Sanitation and conservancy.

(*b*) Supply of water and cleansing and disinfection of sources of water.

(*c*) Maintenance and construction of public streets.

(*d*) Construction of village roads and paths.

(*e*) Protection and repair of any building or property vested in the Panchayat.

The Gram Panchayats have been vested with adequate powers to enforce measures for carrying out these functions.

Failure to comply with the orders of the Executive Committee issued in this behalf is punishable under Section 25. The Government sanctions annually a grant of Rs. 2,75,000 for improvement of water supply in rural areas. Construction of wells is financed out of this grant. The State Government further proposes to integrate the V.V. Force with the Police. There is a proposal to vest the Chief Officers with certain police powers, and to abolish the rural police.

Every Gram Panchayat is responsible for medical relief and first-aid within its jurisdiction. Every Gram Panchayat is provided with a paid Government servant called the Gram Sewak, who is trained in first-aid under St. John Ambulance course. He is required to render first-aid in an emergency. Prevention and control of epidemics and infectious diseases is one of the compulsory duties of a Gram Panchayat. The Gram Sewak is trained in public health measures, viz., vaccination and inoculation and with the assistance of the field staff of the Public Health Department, he enforces measures to prevent epidemics in the jurisdiction of his Gram Panchayat.

Removal of untouchability and construction of wells for Harijans are some of the duties which the Gram Panchayats perform in the social field.

Gram Panchayats are competent to sanction petty works up to the value of Rs. 500 to be financed out of their own funds. A medium work, the estimated cost of which exceeds Rs. 500 and a major work, the estimated cost of which exceeds Rs. 2,000 can be executed with the approval of the Panchayat Committee of the District Board. As the Gram Panchayats do not have any independent source of income in cash, only petty works like repair and construction of roads, repair of culverts, etc., are executed by utilising labour tax and materials collected on voluntary basis.

Improvement and management of irrigation works is one of the compulsory duties of Gram Panchayats. Under Chapter IV of the Bihar Private Irrigation Works Act, 1922, the Government have powers to entrust the maintenance and management of an irrigation work to a village agency. Bihar being a permanently settled State, the responsibility for the maintenance of irrigation sources was on the landlords. In estates, which have been acquired by the Government, the maintenance of irrigation sources is being entrusted to Gram Panchayats. Similarly, minor irrigation schemes executed under the Grow More Food Scheme are being entrusted to Gram Panchayats for maintenance.

Collection Of Land Revenue

The compulsory duties of Gram Panchayats are enumerated in Section 14 and the supplementary duties in Section 15 of the Bihar Panchayat Raj Act, 1947. On account of the Permanent

Settlement, Gram Panchayats in Bihar do not have any revenue jurisdiction. However, the State Government decided, as an experimental measure, to entrust the collection of land revenue to some selected Gram Panchayats in which zamindari interests have been acquired by the Government. Gram Panchayats get suitable commission for this work.

It is also proposed to entrust the management of waste lands and other ancilliary duties to Gram Panchayats. Any expansion in the powers of the Gram Panchayats in the field of revenue administration will depend upon the success of the scheme under implementation.

Judicial Aspect

Under Section 49 of the Bihar Panchayat Raj Act, 1947, every Gram Panchayat for purpose of discharging the judicial functions imposed upon it, establishes a Gram Kutcherry consisting of a panel of 15 persons of the prescribed qualification to be elected by the Gram Panchayat in the prescribed manner. The term of office of every Panch is for three years from the date of election. A Sarpanch is elected by the panel of Panches from amongst themselves in the prescribed manner.

A Bench of Gram Kutcherry is vested with the power of a Magistrate of the third class.

A Bench of Gram Kutcherry has jurisdiction concurrent with that of the Criminal Court within the local limits of whose jurisdiction the Bench is situated for the trial of the following offences as well as abetment of and attempts to commit any such offence, if committed within the local limits of its jurisdiction, namely :

(*a*) Offences under the Indian Penal Code : Sections 140, 143, 145, 147, 151, 153, 160, 172, 174, 178, 179, 269. 277, 279, 283, 285, 286, 289, 290, 294, 323, 334. 336, 341, 352, 356, 357, 358, 374. 379, 380. 381, 403, 411, 426, 428, 430, 447, 448, 461, 504, 506, 510;

(*b*) Offences under the Bengal Public Gambling Act, 1867;

(*c*) Offences under Section 24 and 26 of the Cattle Trespass Act, 1871;

(*d*) Except as otherwise provided, offences under this Act or under any rule of bye-law made thereunder.

(*e*) Any other offence under any other enactment, if empowered in this behalf by the Government.

A Bench of Gram Kutcherry is not bound to follow any laws of evidence or procedure as is required to be adopted in ordinary courts. It follows that procedure which it may consider just and convenient. Equity and good conscience are the considerations which weigh with the Panches in arriving at decisions.

All complaints are filed before the Sarpanch. As soon as a case is instituted and the accused appears, the parties are called upon to nominate a Panch out of the panel of 14 Panches. A new Bench is constituted to hear each case and the Bench records its decisions by a majority of votes. Formal proof is dispensed with. The Bench is required to bring about amicable settlement in all cases arising out of compoundable offences. The Panches nominated by the respective parties use their influence in bringing about amicable settlement. The principle of conciliation is followed. Where a Bench of Gram Kutcherry is unable to bring about an amicable settlement, it proceeds to hear the case and to make an enquiry, receives such evidence as it considers necessary and then records its judgement. An appeal against any order of a Bench of Gram Kutcherry is preferred to the Full Bench of the Gram Kutcherry consisting of the Sarpanch and all the Panches. A quorum of eight Panches has been prescribed for constitution of a Full Bench. In a majority of cases, the Full Bench also uses its influence in bringing about amicable settlement of disputes.

The Bench is empowered to try civil suits also in which the value of the suits does not exceed Rs. 100. By a written agreement of the parties a suit of any description irrespective of the value of the suit can be heard by a Bench of Gram Kutcherry.

The Sub-Divisional Magistrate in respect of criminal cases and the Munsif in respect of civil suits have powers under Section 73 of the Bihar Panchayats Raj Act:

(*a*) to cancel the jurisdiction of the Bench with regard to the suit or case; or

(*b*) to quash any proceeding of the Bench at any stage; or

(*c*) to cancel any order or decree passed by the Bench.

However, the Legal Remembrancer has advised that Sub-Divisional Officer has no power to set aside an order passed by a Bench of the Gram Kutcherry, which has been confirmed in appeal by the Full Bench of the Gram Kutcherry.

The salient features of the judicial system may be briefly given as follows:

1. Villagers obtain justice quickly and cheaply.
2. As formal proof has been dispensed with, trial of cases and suits is finished quickly.
3. As the Panches and parties reside in the same area, perjury which is common in the ordinary courts is eliminated to a considerable extent.

4. For each case a new Bench is constituted. It consists of two accredited representatives of the parties who are selected out of a panel of fourteen elected by adult suffrage. These accredited representatives use their good influence in bringing about amicable settlement of disputes.

5. A Bench of the Gram Kutcherry has also powers to prevent breach of peace and disturbance of the public tranquillity. Under Section 64 of the Act, the Sarpanch is empowered to call upon the parties to show cause why they should not be bound down with or without sureties for keeping the peace for a period not exceeding 15 days.

6. In civil matters, a Bench of the Gram Kutcherry has powers to hear suits of a higher valuation than Rs. 100 with the consent of the parties. There are numerous instances in which bigger suits which were dragging in civil courts for a number of years were settled amicably through the intervention of the Bench of Gram Kutcherry.

7 Lawyers are debarred from appearing before a Bench of Gram Kutcherry and the parties enter into pleadings themselves. The issues are not complicated by the intervention of professional men.

8. Amicable settlement of disputes had a healthy effect on the village politics and restoration of good feelings contributes to healthy community life.

9. The power of conviction and fine vested in the Gram Kutcherries adds to the prestige of the Gram Panchayats and greatly helps in the execution of development schemes. The criminal powers vested in the Gram Kutcherry help Gram Panchayats in the removal of encroachment on public land, etc., and in removal of insanitary conditions prevailing in the Panchayats.

Sources Of Revenue

Gram Panchayats have powers to impose the following types of taxes:

(*a*) Compulsory taxes;
(*b*) Optional taxes;
(*c*) Service taxes.

The compulsory taxes may be classified into two categories: (a) a labour tax on all adult male members within the prescribed age limits which is popularly called labour tax, and (b) a property tax which is a tax on the assessment of income derived from immovable properties. So far as the labour tax is concerned, the lower limit of taxation is 12 units of labour on each male adult between the ages of 18 and 50 payable in easy instalments mostly during the slack season. No upper limit has been prescribed in the Act. There is, however, a proposal to prescribe an upper limit of 30 units. The unit of labour tax is equivalent to four hours of manual labour and is computed in cash at the rate prevailing in the different Panchayats for daily labour.

In the case of property tax, there are no lower and upper limits. The idea is that Gram Panchayats will assess the requirements during a particular financial year and will distribute the burden on all the owners in the Panchayat. Both these taxes are complimentary to each other and the imposition of the property tax is necessary to distribute the burden of taxation evenly between the rich and the poor.

The professional taxes fetch a very nominal income. In brief, Panchayats have powers to impose taxes on professions and callings, on pack animals, on goods exposed for sale in the market and on a number of other subjects.

The service tax is a tax imposed on any particular service provided by Panchayats; for instance, if the Panchayat arranges for lighting of the streets, a tax may be imposed just to cover the actual expenses.

Progress In Formation Of Panchayats

The Gram Panchayats in Bihar have caught the imagination of the people and a new zeal has been created among them for community welfare, so much so that it has been found necessary to replace about 200 Union Boards (roughly) by Gram Panchayats. Under the Five-Year Plan, a target of formation of 1,300 Gram Panchayats has been fixed for each year. On March 31, 1954, there were 2,000 unofficial Panchayats in existence, and as many as 4,387 official Panchayats had been notified, these together covering about one-third of the State.[1] Table 101[2] (p. 492) shows the break-up of these official Panchayats in the districts.

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[1] In a radio talk from Patna Station of the A.I.R. on Independence Day, 1955, the State's Chief Minister, Dr. Sri Krishna Sinha said : "The organisation of villages into self-governing Panchayats has not lagged behind, and we have now more than 7,000 Gram Panchayats covering nearly 45,000 villages with a population of 2.29 crores, out of a total population of 4.02 crores." (The Bihar Information, fortnightly journal published by Director of Public Relations, Bihar, Vol. VIII, No. 17, Dated September 16, 1955; p. 3).

[2] **Panchayat Raj in Bihar**, published by Bihar Public Relations Department, 1954; p. 31.

TABLE 101

Name of District	No. of the Panchayats notified	Name of District	No. of the Panchayats notified
1. Patna ..	388	10. Purnea ..	180
2. Gaya ..	251	11. S. Parganas ..	295
3. Shahabad ..	260	12. Ranchi ..	352
4. Muzaffarpur ..	304	13. Hazaribagh ..	276
5. Saran ..	225	14. Palamau ..	115
6. Champaran ..	383	15. Singbhum ..	258
7. Darbhanga ..	200	16. Manbhum ..	161
8. Bhagalpur ..	234	17. Dhanbad ..	92
9. Monghyr ..	259	18. Saharsa ..	154
Total—4,387			

Dr. A. N. Sinha On Success Of Panchayats In Bihar

The Bihar Panchayats have notable work to their credit. Presenting the 1955-56 Budget to the State Assembly, Bihar's Finance Minister, Shri Anugraha Narayan Sinha, said : "Gram Panchayats have done very good work in flood relief by distributing essential supplies including subsidised foodgrains and by preparing list of flood-sufferers for the different reliefs. An important new experiment is the collection of land revenue through 121 Gram Panchayats. The collection work has been good and no coercive measures have been adopted. Construction of 99 miles of flood control embankments on both the banks of river Burhi-Gandak in the districts of Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga and Monghyr is being entrusted to the Gram Panchayats who are doing the work with enthusiasm and success. On the Kosi Project also, 24 miles of embankments are being constructed through Gram Panchayats." In his 1956-57 Budget speech, the Finance Minister again said: "The target for establishment of 1,300 Gram Panchayats annually during the First Five-Year Plan was fully achieved, and it is hoped that by the end of the current financial year the target will be far exceeded. Gram Panchayats have been doing good work and are now playing an important role in the execution of major national schemes. During the current year they were actively associated with the construction of the Kosi embankment and the Burhi-Gandak embankment. A length of 115.2 miles of flood control embankment was constructed by the Gram Panchayats. On the experience of the work done last year it has been decided to expand the experiment further. The Gram Panchayats have also been increasingly associated with the implementation of the land reforms policy of the Government. A number of Gram Panchayats have already been entrusted with the collection of land revenue, and it is proposed to utilise their good offices for bringing about conciliation between Raiyats and under-Raiyats. In the National Extension Service and Community Development Blocks, the Government have decided to canalise all the activities relating to rural construction work, particularly constructional work, through the agencies of Gram Panchayats. With the important role played by Gram Panchayats in the execution of the Development schemes, need has been felt of arranging a course of training in planning and execution for the non-official workers and necessary provision has been made for this."

Commendable Record Of Bihar Panchayats

We are not aware of the exact number of Panchayats functioning in Bihar today, but according to unconfirmed reports they number 8,000, both official and non-official. And the Bihar Panchayats can claim solid work to their credit. In 1951-52, they constructed 1,417 new pynes, 1,070 new *Ahars,* 391 tanks, and 2,879 wells for irrigational purposes. The corresponding figures for 1952-53 are 578, 523, 478 and 2,938, and for 1953-54, 3,544, 714,610, and 2,998, respectively. Also in 1951-52, 1,469 pynes, 1,039 *Ahars,* 550 tanks, and 1,756 wells were repaired. The corresponding figures for 1952-53 are 1,008, 869, 1,314 and 3,528; and for 1953-54, 1,807, 1,654, 2,289 and 2,239, respectively. The work done by the Panchayats in the field of education is also impressive. During 1951-54, a total of 8,563 social centres were opened by the Gram Panchayats, benefiting 2,44,325 persons. In the same period, 544 basic schools and 3,346 other schools (H.E., M.E., U.P., L.P.) were opened by them, the management of 918 old schools was transferred to the Panchayats, who also opened 3,011 libraries. During the same period (1951-54) the Panchayats constructed 21,336 bore-hole latrines, 49,976 trench latrines, and 60,443 soakage pits. The number of tanks and wells disinfected and de-weeded was only 5,465 in 1951-52, 91,462 in 1952-53, but in 1953-54, this number rose to 1,56,285. In 1951-52, 3,37,734 persons were vaccinated, in 1952-53, this number was 4,80,366, and in 1953-54 persons vaccinated or re-vaccinated were 8,14,535. In the same year (1953-54), 1,91,459 cattle were vaccinated. In 1951-52, the Panchayats planted 2,90,008 trees, and in 1953-54, 3,17,417 trees were planted by them. The number of compost pits dug by Panchayats in 1951-52 was 1,87,482, and in 1953-54, they numbered 2,05,060.

In 1952-53, the Panchayats constructed 310 miles of new roads, and repaired 590 miles of old roads. In the same year they constructed 194 new bridges and culverts estimated to a value of

Rs. 28,193. The length of roads, and number of bridges and culverts constructed by the Gram Panchayats in different districts of the State, in 1953-54, and the cost involved, as also the contribution by the people in labour and cash, would be found in the following table[1]:

TABLE 102

Names of districts	Total mileage of new roads constructed (length in yds.)	Total mileage of old roads repaired (length in yds.)	No. of new bridges and culverts constructed	Total expenditure on improvement of communications	Total No. of Units of Labour realised	Amount from public contribution
Patna	17,014	17,680	31	22,252	36,776	..
Gaya	25,454	12,668	10	41,968	5,242	..
Shahabad	12,111	18,410	3	21,738	48,151	300
Muzaffarpur	96,064	3,09,772	32	1,03,655	56,321	29,695
Saran	13,776	63,816	12	21,895	15,403	2,021
Champaran	59,607	2,69,493	133	1,37,605	1,19,237	2,207
Darbhanga	61,138	2,48,150	37	52,139	75,434	6,905
Bhagalpur	31,595	46,207	9	18,666	75,453	1,805
Monghyr	18,758	50,255	13	34,565	22,110	8,607
Purnea	16,078	30,846	7	4,552	13,321	660
Santhal Parganas	5,71,081	4,96,674	19	96,493	68,391	869
Ranchi	2,40,677	4,19,494	7	97,417|8|-	1,94,940	2,291
Hazaribagh	69,487	2,28,035	3,302	31,619	77,296	792
Palamau	31,096	11,774	2	11,012	..	..
Singhbhum	1,18,200	1,00,046	..	7,655	61,061	..
Manbhum	44,000	79,200	4	879	2,213	325
Dhanbad	14,960	30,360	5	5,368	1,474	..
Saharsa	2,29,602	27,761	..	17,039	39,255	2,468
	1,470,698 835 miles	24,60,641 1,398 miles	3,626	7,26,317|8|-	9,12,081	58,945

In 1953-54, 1,029 trained Chief Officers functioned in different districts. These Chief Officers started 1,120 camps in different districts for the training of the Village Volunteer Force. A total of 36,329 persons were thus trained in the entire State, the Santhal Parganas leading with 19,253 trainees, followed by Champaran (2,983).

Tax Collection Work Of Panchayats

The realisation of taxes by selected Gram Panchayats has also been a success. In 1952-53, for example, Panchayats so selected covered a population of 22,96,175, where tax had to be collected from 3,85,726 persons. Table 103[2] (pp. 496-497) shows the tax collection work by Bihar Panchayats during 1950-51, 1951-52 and 1953-54.

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[1] Administration Report of Gram Panchayat Department, Government of Bihar, 1953-54; pp. 30-31.

Judicial Work Of Bihar Panchayats

The judicial work of Bihar Panchayats is not as impressive as in the neighbouring State of Uttar Pradesh. They have, nevertheless, a creditable record. In 1951-52, 4,387 suits were filed before Gram Kutcherrys out of which 2,037 were compromised. The corresponding figures for 1952-53 are 8,475 and 4,787, respectively. In 1951-52, 17,262 cases were disposed of by Gram Kutcherrys, out of which 11,389 were compromised. The corresponding figures for 1952-53 are 19,837 and 12,685, respectively. Tables[1] 104 (pp. 496-497) and 105 (pp. 498-499) show the number of cases and suits tried by Gram Kutcherrys in different districts of Bihar during 1953-54.

Thus, out of a total of 30,760 cases field in Gram Kutcherrys, 19,768 or nearly 64 per cent, were compromised through the efforts of Sarpanches and Panches. Appeals were filed in 1,276 cases, and the full bench succeeded in compromising 475 cases. Less than 500 cases went in appeal to the Sub-Divisional Officer and in nearly 50 per cent cases they were dismissed and the judgement of the Panchayat upheld. The number of civil suits instituted in Gram Panchayats was 8,681, out of which 4,204, or nearly 48 per cent, were amicably settled. Appeals were filed against the judgement of the Panchayats only in 267 cases. The success of the experiment is apparent. Panchayats have succeeded in reducing litigation in the villages. The Bihar Pradesh Congress has opined[2]: "The establishment of village courts has definitely reduced the number of minor cases going in the urban courts. Party influence and groupings have been manifested in very few cases."

Panchayats In The Bihar Press

That Panchayats in Bihar have come to occupy a place of importance in the lives of the people is evident from the way Panchayat news is featured in the press of the State, specially the Hindi press. Apart from news items, notes, etc., in the English

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[1] Administrative Report of Gram Panchayat Department, 1953-54, Op. cit., pp. 22-23.

[2] See Report of the Congress Village Panchayat Committee, Op. cit. Appendic C, p. LV. The following remarks of the Bihar Congress in relation to judicial functions of Bihar Panchayats would be found of interest: "Panchayats are frequently confronted with difficulties arising from the duality of jurisdiction. Often it happens that some cases which are tried in Panchayats are also referred to the Police. The Police starts its routine enquiry and often the members of Panchayats are also implicated in the case with the result that in the court, the Panchayat members have to appear like any other accused. Another difficulty that confronts the Panchayats is in the matter of handling persons who are a threat to the peaceful life of the village and do not acknowledge its authority. The Panchayat has great difficulty in serving any notice, summons, etc., to such a person. Moreover, they do not have the requisite finances to pursue the matter in higher courts."

TABLE

S. No.	Year	Population covered by Gram Panchayats	No. of persons on whom the tax was imposed	Amount of labour tax converted into cash	Property Tax
1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	1950-51	12,95,465	1,30,266	2,25,410-8-1½	6,984-7-3
2.	1951-52	18,14,120	2,41,651	3,91,697	16,061
3.	1952-53	22,96,175	3,85,726	7,81,983	50,886

press, which are very few in number, (and their coverage of Panchayat news can at best be called scanty), the Hindi dailies, as also the weeklies, have regular columns on Panchayats. The dailies supply detailed news of work done in different Village Panchayats, feature articles on the subject, write editorially upon it, and, on the whole, give the impression of intense Panchayat activity in the State. Almost all important weeklies of the State, which we have perused, devote two or three pages every week to Panchayats. Panchayat activities are reported, letters from Panchayat workers are published, the experience gained in good work in any particular area is recounted, and thus made the property of all Panchayat workers. Special Panchayat Numbers have been published. And there are some monthlies devoted ex-

TABLE

Name of district	No. of cases filed	No. of Cases disposed of				
		Compromised	Dismissed	Convicted	Pending	Total
Patna	1,397	716	154	292	235	1,397
Gaya	198	131	..	18	49	198
Shahabad	246	114	24	15	93	246
Muzaffarpur	1,874	1.508	..	169	197	1,874
Saran	1,045	740	..	113	192	1,045
Champaran	5,609	2,788	1,044	796	981	5,609
Darbhanga	1,685	1,016	326	96	247	1,685
Bhagalpur	1,563	790	..	563	210	1,563
Monghyr	1,847	1,302	173	198	174	1,847
Purnea	1,876	1,261	..	245	370	1,876
Santhal Pargana	5,262	3,922	..	541	799	5,262
Ranchi	1,206	674	..	398	134	1,206
Hazaribagh	2,055	1,357	..	370	328	2,055
Palamau	1,248	590	233	198	227	1,248
Singhbhum	766	533	84	86	63	766
Manbhum	1,334	1,280	..	44	10	1,334
Dhanbad	596	338	116	29	113	596
Saharsa	953	708	..	245	..	953
Total	30,760	19,768	2,154	4,416	4,422	30,760

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Professional Tax	Animal Tax	Fees & Fines	Donations and Subscriptions	Grant from Govt.	Misc. receipts	No. of Gram Panchayats
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
6,347-4-0	2,770-10-0	17,314-0-6	43,229-3-3	3,407-4-0	3,159-7-0	483
8,728	4,146	31,328	88,444	8,080	5,252	639
12,870	6,746	53,455	93,143	10,356	8,351	781

clusively to Panchayats. Mention may be made in this connection of *Panchayat Sandesh*, the monthly organ of Bihar Panchayat Parishad, an unofficial organisation, comprising representatives of Panchayats. This Parishad has been doing very good work in popularising the Panchayat idea. Its annual conference last year was addressed by the President, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, and this year, on April 22, 1950, its Fourth Annual Conference was inaugurated by the Prime Minister, Shri Jawaharlal Nehru. This organisation is working in close co-operation with the Government, and is headed by leading Congressmen of the State.

Control And Co-ordination

Theoretically, there is a provision for co-ordination between a Panchayat and other nation-building Departments, but this has in

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No. of cases in which appeals against the orders of bench were preferred to the full bench					No. of cases tried by S.D.O. u/s/ 73 of Bihar Panchayats Raj Act.	
Compromised u/s 58	Up-held	Modified	Dismissed	Total	Dismissed	Modified or upheld
5	26	19	25	75	22	49
11	3	1	3	18	4	..
..	10	12	8	30	7	3
4	40	21	15	80	11	46
15	15	8	8	46	22	21
10	20	35	21	86	22	39
31	6	10	5	52	11	5
1	10	..	14	25	9	..
13	26	14	13	69	9	3
16	7	3	7	33	2	7
160	39	44	48	291	56	24
40	25	27	5	97	18	6
12	28	41	28	109	1	12
4	14	13	2	33	13	17
..	..	..	..	..	..	..
80	..	8	..	88	..	8
11	14	22	18	68	23	3
59	3	8	9	79	21	6
478	286	288	229	1,270	251	246

TABLE

Name of the District	No. of suits filed	No. of suits disposed of by Gram Kutcherry				
		Compromised	Decreed	Pending	Dismissed	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Patna	330	159	123	28	20	330
Gaya	29	7	18	4	..	29
Shahabad	29	14	6	5	4	29
Muzaffarpur	925	342	360	135	88	925
Saran	386	181	116	64	25	336
Champaran	1,510	587	354	433	135	1,510
Darbhanga	446	245	119	82	..	446
Bhagaipur	333	123	151	59	..	333
Monghyr	719	363	35	201	120	719
Purnea	543	245	156	142	..	543
Santhal Parganas	1,745	1,178	371	196	..	1,745
Ranchi	323	202	93	28	..	323
Hazaribagh	447	183	169	95	..	447
Palamau	492	162	162	112	56	492
Singhbhum	199	97	44	58	..	199
Manbhum	34	27	4	3	..	34
Dhanbad	94	45	..	20	..	94
Saharsa	97	44	2	28	..	97
Total	8,681	4,204	2,335	1,693	449	8,681

practice been achieved only in the Community Project areas and in the N.E.S. Blocks. The District Judge, the District Magistrate and the Sub-Divisional Magistrate have powers to inspect the judicial records of the Gram Kutcherry. Similarly, any gazetted officer, and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the District Board have powers to inspect the office of the Gram Panchayat. A separate Department of Gram Panchayat has been created at the State Headquarters under a Director of Gram Panchayats. He is assisted by a Deputy Director and a State Organiser of Village Volunteer Forces. In each district, there is a District Panchayat Officer, belonging to the general cadre of State Civil Service (Senior and Junior Branch). In each sub-division, there is a Supervisor of Gram Panchayats. The Government has the power to de-notify a Panchayat which works unsatisfactorily, but no such occasion has hitherto arisen. The Union Committees and Union Boards are in a decadent state, and they are being gradually abolished and replaced by Gram Panchayats. So far as the District Boards are concerned, Chapter IV of the State Panchayat Act details the rela-

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No. of suits disposed of by Gram Kutcherry of Gram Kutchery were filed					No. of suits tried by Munsif u/s 73 of B.P. Raj Act	
Compromised	Upheld	Modified	Dismissed	Total	Dismissed	Upheld or modified
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
7	5	6	4	22	1	4
1	2	1	..	4	..	..
..	..	2	..	2	2	3
2	10	4	4	20	3	12
5	..	2	7	14	13	..
21	6	14	1	42	2	1
3	4	..	4	11	1	1
..	..	..	..	..	..	..
..	6	..	2	8	9	..
..	1	..	1	2	..	..
20	6	14	3	43	2	2
14	..	8	9	31	3	3
..	3	11	14	32	4	..
1	11	3	1	16	..	..
..	..	1	2	3	..	..
..	..	..	..	..	..	..
..	..	..	..	..	..	..
7	..	1	9	17	..	..
85	54	67	61	267	40	26

tionship between them and the Gram Panchayats. District Boards can appoint Gram Panchayat Committees and delegate some functions to them. In actual practice, the District Boards have generally shown very little interest in Panchayats, and have not delegated any of their functions to them.

The Anchal Adhikari

The Government of the State has in fact given serious thought to the question of effective co-ordination of welfare activities in the rural areas, which are continuously expanding. The lowest gazetted officer used to be the Sub-Divisional Officer with jurisdiction covering on the average an area of 1,300 square miles, with a population of about 7 lakhs. Different Departments have their own officers in rural areas, but there is insufficient co-ordination and integration among them. To remove this lacuna, the State Government launched the Anchal Adhikari Scheme in Darbhanga, Gaya, Monghyr and Hazaribagh districts in 1954.[1] Under this

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[1] See **Bihar 1953-54**, published by the Department of Public Relations, Bihar; p. 38.

TABULAR REPRESENTATION IX

No. of Villages and Village Panchayats	Legislation passed	Amendment	Village Panchayats	
			How constituted	Powers in Village Management
Total No. of Villages 71,318 No. of Panchayats Official 4,387 No. of unofficial Panchayats. 20,500 Village covered (unofficial Panchayts 6,200	Bihar and Orissa Local Self-Govt Act of 1885. Bihar Panchayat Act, 1947.		Adult Franchise proportionate representation on population basis. One for every group of 4,000 population in Northern, Southern Dist. and 2,500 people in Chota Nagpur. Selective method followed in the establishment of Panchayats.	Executive, Judicial, Local Security to be looked after. Establishment of Village Volunteer Force. Public health, sanitation; can levy taxes. Can impose fines. Local development, control over public streets. Development and maintenance of education, irrigation works Co-ordinate the nation-building departments.

Scheme, each Anchal, which will usually be co-extensive with a police station in the area and will have about a lakh of population will be incharge of an officer of the rank of a Sub-Deputy Collector, known as Anchal Adhikari. He will be responsible for the co-ordination of different activities in the area, including those of Gram Panchayats, co-operatives, etc.

Proposed Amendments: Panchayats In The Second Plan

From the experience gained by the working of Gram Panchayats, the State Government is contemplating a comprehensive amendment of the existing Panchayat Act. Among the proposals, one relates to raising the size of the existing Gram Panchayats by inclusion of some more villages, the object being to reduce the overall expenditure in the implementation of schemes. The Planning Commission has suggested that the Gram Panchayats should function as Village Production Councils. Under the existing provisions for constitution of Panchayats, very often enthusiastic farmers, co-operative and social workers, etc., whom the Planning Commission would like to be in the village body, do not find a place. It is proposed to amend Section 11 of the Act so that one-fifth of the total number of members of the executive committee may be nominated. This power would be delegated to the District Panchayat Officers. The sources of income allotted to Gram Panchayats are inadequate. It is, therefore, proposed to impose a surcharge on the land revenue, as recommended by the Planning Commis-

PANCHAYAT INSTITUTION IN BIHAR

Sources of Revenue of Panchayats	Nyaya Panchayats		Report on the working of Panchayats		REMARKS
	How constituted	Powers	Gram	Nyaya	
Government grants. Taxes also can be levied. Two kinds of compulsory taxes stipulated : 1) Labour Tax —minimum is 48 hours a year or 12 units. 2) Tax in cash. Tax on vehicles, trade and professions. Service taxes like water rate, drainage fee.	Gram Kutcherry, 15 persons elected by Gram Panchayats; term 3 years. One Sarpanch elected.	Can try civil and some criminal cases The decision of a full bench is final and no appeals can be made in cases coming within their jurisdiction. Endeavour is to bring about conciliation.	Collected grain for the relief of distressed in Gaya. Nearly 4½ lakh people vaccinated. Wells were repaired and constructed. People helped in checking crimes.	Disposed of 4,387 civil and 17,262 criminal suits in 1951-52, 19,837 civil and 12,685 criminal suits in 1952-53 and 6,681 civil and 30,760 criminal suits in 1953-54.	Found most suitable agency for development schemes. Emphasis is on evolution in place of imposition from above. Labour Tax is a novel method of levy.

sion. Further, the Panchayats are to be yet more widely entrusted with the collection of rent and given a suitable commission for the work. In line with the Madras Panchayat Act, it is proposed to add to the income of the Panchayats by imposing a surcharge of 2% on stamp duty. There is also a proposal for the integration of the Village Volunteer Forces with the Police. For this, the Chief Officer, to begin with, may be delegated the powers of a Police Officer as defined in Section 23 of the Police Act. It is also proposed to make Gram Panchayat function as the Land Management Committee of the village, responsible for reclamation of all waste-lands and management of all public and Government properties.

The State Government has drawn up an ambitious programme of Panchayat development during the Second Five-Year Plan. Four thousand Gram Panchayats will be formed at a cost of Rs. 6 crores during the Second Five-Year Plan period. A Gram Panchayat as the basic unit of administration is being linked with the N.E.S. Scheme.

In each Block there will be on an average 10 *halkas* each of which will have two Gram Panchayats. Ultimately 12,000 Gram Panchayats will cover the whole State. By the end of 1955-56, as many as 8,000 Gram Panchayats will have been established, thus leaving a balance of 4,000 to be formed during the Second Five-Year Plan period.

It is proposed to cover the whole State with a network of Panchayats in the first three years of the Second Plan. Accordingly it is proposed to establish 1,334 Gram Panchayats every year for three years under the Second Plan.

As many as 5,000 *Gram Sevaks* and 8,000 trained chief officers will be required. When the post of chief officer, at present honorary, begins to carry a salary, 12,000 persons will be employed as chief officers.

It is proposed to make a provision of Rs. 5 lakhs per year to create a development fund for financing village plans. Out of this fund grants-in-aid will be sanctioned to Village Panchayats for the execution of minor development schemes for which a provision of Rs. 25 lakhs for the creation of a development fund will be made.

It is proposed to arrange a fortnight's training course for *mukhias* (head of executives) and Sarpanches. They will assemble at convenient centres and will be trained in their duties under the supervision and guidance of officers specially deputed for the purpose. This will entail an expenditure of Rs. 2,075 lakhs.

During the period of training these non-official workers will be given a thorough training in aspects of village planning, rural housing, growth of cottage industries, in addition to their own duties.

CHAPTER XXI

TRAVANCORE-COCHIN

IN December 1955, while touring the district of Malabar, Prime Minister Nehru called it "the garden of India." Having visited all nooks and corners of India as none has done, except probably Mahatma Gandhi, this description by the Prime Minister must be regarded as eminently suited to this beautiful country, the pride of our motherland. We would only add that the description should not be confined to Malabar but should be extended to the entire State of Travancore-Cochin. The tragedy, however, is that the great beauty and culture of this State, and the courtesy and uniform goodness of its people, is matched today by its ugly and heart-rending poverty. Such misery of the masses in the midst of an utterly bounteous nature is a challenge to our entire being and heritage.

This southern-most State of the Indian Union, occupying the south-west portion of the Peninsula, was inaugurated on 2nd July, 1949, by the integration of the two ancient states of Travancore and Cochin. Travancore and Cochin, along with Malabar and adjacent territories, constituted the ancient Chera kingdom. The Western Ghats, forming a continuous mountain chain of varying latitude from north to south, isolated the region from the rest of India, and conferred a distinctiveness on its history and culture. Travancore-Cochin is akin to a vast amphitheatre, the land rising tier upon tier. The top terrace skirts the Sahyadri at a height of 8,000 feet above sea level. With Arabian Sea on the west and Western Ghats on the east, the breadth of the State varies irregularly from about 20 miles in the extreme north and south, to a maximum of 75 miles in the middle. Numerous rivers, e.g., Chalakkudi (90 miles), Periyar (142 miles), Muvattupuzha (62 miles), Pampa (90 miles), Kallada (70 miles), Karamana (42 miles), running east to west, intersect the State. Near the coast these river waters spread themselves out into a number of lakes and lagoons, the largest of which is Vembanad, 50 miles long and 9 miles broad. Extensive tea and cardamom plantations have sprung up on most of the higher elevations. Pepper, ginger, rubber, turmeric flourish on the lesser uplands. In both regions, there are reserved forests yielding valuable timber.

Density Of Population—Highest In India

The total area of the State is 9,143.9 square miles. The State is divided into four districts, namely, Trivandrum, Quilon, Kottayam and Trichur. Trivandrum has 8 taluks and an area of 1,491.8 square miles. Quilon has an area of 2,729.6 square miles and 12 sub-divisions; Kottayam and Trichur have 8 taluks each with 2,954.1 and 1,968.4 square miles of area, respectively. The total population of the State, according to the 1951 Census, was 92,80,425. Among the Indian States, Travancore-Cochin ranks nineteenth in area but eleventh in population. In point of density of population, it is ahead of all States. The following table[1] compares the densities of some of the thickly-peopled Population Divisions in India with Travancore-Cochin :

TABLE 106

Population Division	Area in square miles	Density
Greater Bombay Division	211	13,456
Delhi Division	578	3,017
Travancore-Cochin Division	9,144	1,015
Bengal Plain Division	24,341	936
East Uttar Pradesh Plain Division	21,053	850
North Bihar Plain Division	21,661	839
South Bihar Plain Division	15,509	721
Central Uttar Pradesh Plain Division	22,505	717
West Madras Division	10,872	627

Comparison with Greater Bombay or Delhi is not valid as these are urban, metropolitan aggregations. Among the countries of the world, England and Wales, Belgium and Japan have the highest densities (754, 733, 583 respectively). Thus Travancore-Cochin easily becomes the most densely populated tract in the world. The position would better be appreciated if it is borne in mind that out of the total area of 9,144 square miles, 2,456 square miles are under reserved forests. Thus the area under occupation comes to about 5,000 square miles and the density on occupied land works up to about 1,800 per square mile! The population of the State is now almost two and a half times what it was 50 years ago. During the last decade the population has increased by 23.7 per cent.

The Village In Travancore-Cochin

And now a few words about the country-side of this unique State. The term 'village' as ordinarily understood to indicate compact dwelling places in the midst of cultivated fields all round is invariably absent in Travancore-Cochin, except a few places in South Travancore and Shenkotta and Chittur. The whole State, forming the highland, is dotted over with isolated homesteads.[1] And so the term 'village' as used for Census and other purposes has to be clearly understood. In the former Travancore state, the taluk was divided into a number of administrative units called *pakuthy*. The *pakuthy* is further sub-divided into a number of smaller units known as *kara* or *muri*. The *pakuthy* is under a revenue officer called the village officer, but there is no separate officer for each *kara*. Thus the *kara*, though not an administrative unit, has boundaries well understood by the people of the locality. Since 1901 the *kara* has been regarded as synonymous with 'village' for Census purposes. In 1901 there were 3,885 *karas*. In 1951 their number was 3,855. The average area of a *kara* is 1.9 square miles.

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[1] Census of India, 1951, Vol. XIII, Travancore-Cochin, Part I-A—Report by V. Sivaraman Nair, Delhi, 1953.

In the merged Cochin territory, the taluk is divided into a number of administrative units called *proverthy,* which is divided into a number of units called *desam*. In the 1901 Census, a *desam* with an area of 2.1 square miles was treated as a village. From 1911 onwards, however, the *proverthy* has been treated as a village. In 1911 the number of *proverthies* was 273, while in 1951 it was 275. The average area of a *proverthy* is 5.4 square miles.[2]

Growth Of Rural Population

With these as definitions of villages in the integrated State of Travancore-Cochin, their total area works out to 8,846 square miles. With 84 per cent of the population of the State living in villages, the rural density works out to the high figure of 881. If the area of reserve forests (2,456 square miles) is excluded, the rural density works out to 1,219. The pressure of population on land can well be understood. In Orissa and Uttar Pradesh, for example, the percentage of rural population is higher than in Travancore-Cochin, namely, 96 and 86, but the density is only 234 and 487, respectively. The rural population in the State has been steadily growing in numbers from decade to decade as would be seen in the following table[1]:

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[1] U. Sivaraman Nair says : "A heavy rainfall and the unevenness of the surface of the country have resulted in a diffusion of water supply; this along with the availability of comparatively easy means of communication, whether by land or by water, has been responsible for the scattered disposition of homesteads, a characteristic feature of the landscape in this State. Houses are never built in streets, regular or irregular, but lie scattered all over the countryside in picturesque confusion, without any order or regularity, each house, even the humblest, standing in its own compound surrounded by valuable plants and trees." (Ibid, p. 29).

[2] The average area of the *proverthy*, as also of the *kara*, is calculated by dividing the rural area by the corresponding number of *proverthies* or *karas*. Sivaraman Nair says that in Cochin, it would have been more appropriate to consider *desam* as a village, but it could not be done on account of practice in force at previous Censuses.

TABLE 107

Year	Rural population at each Census as percentage of that in 1901	Percentage decennial growth	
		Rural	Urban
1901	100	..	..
1911	115	15	16
1921	127	11	15
1931	159	24	26
1941	187	18	19
1951	223	19	24

Quilon contains a little over one-third, Trichur one-fourth, and Kottayam and Trivandrum one-fifth each of the total rural population. The distribution and density of the rural population in the districts would be found in the following table :[2]

TABLE 108

District	Percentage	Density
Trivandrum	76	1,169
Quilon	87	996
Kottayam	89	549
Trichur	84	1,014

Distribution Of Rural Population In Villages Of Different Sizes

There are on an average 1,912 persons in a village. In the districts, the average population per village varies considerably. It is lowest in Trivandrum and highest in Trichur. Only 3 per cent of the rural population are in villages having less than 500 persons; 25 per cent are in villages with population between 500-2,000. The remaining 72 per cent are in villages with population over 2,000. Among the districts, Trichur has only 15 per cent of the rural population in villages with less than 2,000 population, and 53 per cent are in villages with a population of 5,000 persons or more. In the other districts, the largest percentage is in villages of 2,000-5,000 population. The distribution of rural population in villages under different population groups for the last two decades would be found in the following table[3] :

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[1] Ibid, p. 31.

[2] Ibid, p. 30.

[3] Ibid, p. 30.

TABLE 109

Size of Village	Persons per 1,000 of rural population		
	1931	1941	1951
5,000 and over ..	171	229	323
2,000 to 5,000 ..	388	408	393
500 to 2,000 ..	385	320	253
Below 500 ..	56	43	31

Livelihood Classes

The distribution of the principal earners in different livelihood classes for each 100 of the general population for the last two decades is as under :

TABLE 110 [1]

	1931	1941	1951
All Classes ..	100	100	100
Livelihood Class I ..	24	23	21
,, ,, II ..	5	6	6
,, ,, III ..	18	15	24
,, ,, IV ..	1	1	1
All Agricultural Classes ..	48	45	52
All Non-Agricultural Classes ..	52	55	48

Says U. Sivaraman Nair : ".. the bias towards industrial pursuits existing in 1931 and 1941 has completely vanished in 1951. This change is the result of relatively high percentage of agricultural labourers in 1951". Nair thinks that before 1941, the agricultural products fetched low prices and wages in kind were meagre and this had the effect of turning the labouring class to non-agricultural occupations. In the decade 1941-1951, however, there was a steep rise in prices and wages and there was acute shortage and non-availability of food and this made the working classes to switch on to agriculture.

Taking the population as a whole (as distinct from the earning sections thereof), 55 per cent fall under agricultural classes and the remaining 45 per cent are non-agriculturists. This comparatively high percentage of non-agricultural population should not lead one to the conclusion that there is considerable industrialisation in the State, or there is a large urban population. Actually, the percentage of urban population is only 16. Naturally, the majority of persons in non-agricultural classes are in rural areas engaged in services unrelated to industry. The 55 per cent of the agricultural classes consist of 27 per cent cultivating owners, 7 per cent tenants, 20 per cent agricultural labourers and 1 per cent rent-receivers.

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[1] Ibid, p. 26.

As already mentioned, the percentage of rural population is 84. Naturally, therefore, the livelihood pattern of the rural population is more or less the same as that of the general population. Among 100 persons in rural areas, 30 cultivate their own land, 8 are cultivating tenants, 22 are agricultural labourers and only 1 is a rent-receiver. Thus, 61 per cent of the rural population is agricultural and 39 per cent of the rural population is engaged in non-agricultural pursuits. This 39 per cent, however, includes those engaged in different types of plantations and a variety of other occupations more akin to agriculture than industry, but actually classed under the head non-agricultural.

The agricultural livelihood classes compared as percentages of the total agricultural population bring forth more sharply the pattern in the countryside of the State. 48 per cent of the agricultural population belongs to Class I, that is, owner-cultivators, 13 per cent to Class II, that is, cultivating tenants, 2 per cent to Class III, that is, agricultural rent-receivers, and as high as 37 per cent to Class IV, that is, agricultural labourers.

Coming back to the relative proportions of agricultural livelihood classes expressed as percentages of the total rural population, we have seen that the Census Report puts the agricultural labourers at 22 per cent. The General Village Survey of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry has returned a much higher figure. For the purpose of this Survey, 16 villages were selected which comprised 6,071 families. The occupational distribution of the families would be found in Table 111[1] (p. 509).

Caste Composition

Thus, according to this Survey, agricultural labourers constituted 32.8 per cent of the total rural population of 62.7 per cent. The General Family Survey returned 66.6 per cent as the agricultural and 33.4 per cent as the non-agricultural population. Out of this, the families of agricultural landowners formed 19.0 per cent of the total. The families of tenants accounted for only 8.1 per cent of the total. The agricultural workers' families formed 39.5 per cent of the total. The Survey has the following to say about caste composition :[2]

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[1] Agricultural Wages in India, Op. cit., p. 281.

[2] Rural Man-Power and Occupational Structure, Op. cit., p. 296-297.

TABLE 111

Occupation		Number of families		Percentage to total number of families
Agricultural Owners		1,253		20.6
Agricultural Tenants		565		9.3
Agricultural workers :				
(i) Without land	1,071)	1,988	17.7)	32.8
(ii) With land	917)		15.1)	
Total Agricultural Families		3,806		62.7
Total Non-Agricultural Families		2,265		37.3
All Families ..		6,071		100.0

"Of the 6,079 families in the sample villages, 30 were Brahmins, 7 Vaishyas and 2,397 scheduled castes or backward classes; the remaining 3,645 families belonged to other communities or to unspecified castes. Almost all the agricultural workers' families belonged to scheduled castes and backward classes. A fairly large number of families of backward classes were, however, landholders and non-agriculturists as well".

Size Distribution Of Holdings

According to this Survey, there were 3,785 holdings with the families living in the sample villages. The distribution of cultivators' holdings according to size and categories of families would be found in Table 112[1] (pp. 510-511).

The following picture emerges : 50.2 per cent of the holdings are less than 1 acre and occupy only 7.8 per cent of the area. 74.6 per cent of the holdings are below 2.5 acres and occupy only 23.7 per cent of the area. Further, 87.8 per cent of the holdings are less than 5 acres and occupy only 42.5 per cent of the area. The gross mal-adjustment of land distribution in the rural areas of Travancore-Cochin is thus apparent. Probably such mal-distribution of cultivated land would be found in no other State of the Indian Union. And it may be noted that in the picture we have attempted to present, there is no mention of huge areas owned by the planters, individually or through companies, among whom some of the biggest are foreign. The existence of acute class conflicts in the rural areas and frequent disturbance of agrarian peace as also the left influence can be traced to these factors in the countryside.

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[1] Ibid, p. 303.

TABLE

Size of holdings	HOLDERS' FAMILY			
	Agricultural Owners		Agricultural Tenants	
	No.	Area (Acres)	No.	Area (Acres)
1	2	3	4	5
Under 1 acre	254	135.29	40	21.67
1 acre and under 2.5 acres ..	368	593.53	124	213.72
2.5 acres and under 5 acres ..	239	812.83	143	496.67
5 acres and under 7.5 acres ..	96	578.35	60	354.07
7.5 acres and under 10 acres ..	41	344.76	35	291.53
10 acres and under 25 acres ..	74	1,065.44	51	899.92
25 acres and under 50 acres ..	11	392.97	8	238.40
50 acres and under 100 acres ..	4	264.97	1	79.00
100 acres and above ..	1	128.00	nil	nil
Total ..	1,088	4,316.14	472	2,594.98
Average size of holding ..		3.97		5.50

Note : Figures within brackets are percentages to the total.

Panchayats Before Merger—In Travancore

Panchayat legislations were on the statute books of the princely states of Travancore and Cochin even before their merger. The Travancore Village Panchayat Act was passed in Karkatakam 1100 (August 1925) for fostering and developing local self-government in the rural areas of the State. Under this Act, however, hardly half a dozen Panchayats came to be constituted in the course of many years. The Travancore Village Unions Act was passed in Thulam 1115 (i.e. November 1939), and 39 Village Unions were constituted soon after. The Division Peishkars were the Registrars of the Village Panchayats and the Village Unions in their respective Divisions. At the close of the year 1120 (1935), certain changes were made in the control and constitution of these bodies in order to improve their working. It was felt that the Division Peishkars, as also the Tehsildars (who were the Presidents of the Village Unions), had numerous other responsibilities and could give hardly any attention to the growth of the village bodies. The administration of these local bodies was, therefore, taken away from the Revenue Department and entrusted to the Public Health Department.

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OCCUPATION				**TOTAL**	
Agricultural Workers		**Non-Agriculturists**		**No. of Holdings**	**Area (Acres)**
No.	**Area (Acres)**	**No.**	**Area (Acres)**		
6	7	8	9	10	11
904	302.83	704	253.86	1,902 (50.2)	713.65 (7.8)
255	373.75	183	270.78	930 (24.6)	1,451.78 (15.9)
60	191.29	59	201.49	501 (13.2)	1,702.28 (18.8)
18	104.83	22	130.23	196 (5.2)	1,167.48 (12.8)
1	7.56	7	60.11	84 (2.2)	703.96 (7.7)
2	25.75	9	133.29	146 (3.9)	2,124.40 (23.3)
nil	nil	nil	nil	19 (.5)	631.37 (6.9)
nil	nil	nil	nil	5 (.01)	343.97 (3.8)
nil	nil	1	150.00	2 (.1)	278.00 (3.0)
1,240	1,006.01	985	1,199.76	3,785 (100.0)	9,116.89 (100.0)
	0.81		1.22		2.41

At the commencement of 1123 Malabar Era (M.E.), i.e. 1947-48 A.D., there were 107 Village Unions and 7 Village Panchayats in the State, covering an area of 1,605 square miles with a population of nearly 18 lakhs. In the same year, sanction was accorded for constituting 74 more Village Unions. The area covered by these bodies at the end of the year thus was 2,274 square miles with a population of nearly 26 lakhs. All the Village Unions had non-official Presidents during the year. The total receipts and expenditure of all the Village Unions and Panchayats amounted to Rs. 71,356 and Rs. 1,22,535, respectively in 1947-48. The total contribution made by the Government towards these institutions amounted to Rs. 69,074.[1]

The Panchayats in this old set-up did not apparently meet with any notable success. Thus, for example, after more than two decades of existence, in 1947-48, only six Village Unions maintained libraries and reading rooms, only 15 Village Unions were supplied with Radio sets, only 13 Unions and one Panchayat undertook the distribution of manure, etc.

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[1] These informations are based on **Travancore Administration**, 1123 M.E. (1947-48), Ninety-second Annual Report, Trivandrum, 1949; see pp. 172-175.

Panchayats Before Merger—In Cochin

In Cochin the Panchayat experiment was launched earlier, in 1913 A. D. The sanction was given by the then ruler, His Highness Sir Sri Rama Varma, on the occasion of his Shashtiabdapoorthi Thirunal in Dhanu, 1088 (i.e., 1913 A.D.). A Village Panchayat Act was passed in the following year, and five Panchayats were started, one in each taluk, as an experimental measure. This ' experiment ' was made yet more ludicrous by the following. Of the five members of each Panchayat, four were nominated by the Government from the leading citizens of the village, and the village officer, ex-officio, was the fifth member. Further, payment of an assessment of Rs. 50 was made the minimum property qualification for becoming a Panchayatdar. Special consideration was, however, given to graduates of recognised Universities, and Government pensioners who had been in superior service of the State, who were also made eligible for membership. Three years later, half a dozen Panchayats were invested with judicial powers and were authorised to form themselves into courts exercising civil jurisdiction in petty cases in the villages under their jurisdiction. Subsequently, it appears, the Panchayats were allowed to be formed more widely. Many amendments were introduced in the original Panchayat Act to facilitate the formation of Panchayats. In 1945, Panchayat work was taken away from the Public Health Department, and a separate Department created under a Director of Panchayats.

In 1947-48, the total number of Panchayats in the State numbered 87, with a total of 559 members, of whom 366 were elected and 193 nominated. In this year, the Panchayats were maintaining 211 irrigation systems, and opened about 40 miles of new roads. Every Panchayat maintained a manure depot. They also maintained 85 summer bundhs in satisfactory condition. The receipts and expenditure of the Panchayat Department amounted to Rs. 7,832 and Rs. 90,006, as against Rs. 7,171 and Rs. 7,05,682 in the previous year.[1]

The Village Courts Act Of Cochin

In 1942-43, the State Government created a separate Department of Village Courts, by an enactment called the Village Courts Act (XII of 1118 M.E.). The Panchayat Courts that were functioning in the State were renamed as Village Courts and the judges were nominated by Government. In 1946-47, there were 47 Village Courts and had in their jurisdiction all the villages in the

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[1] Report on the Administration of Cochin for 1122 M.E. (1946-47); Ernakulam, 1948; see p. 55.

State. Including the previous balance of 376 suits, the Village Courts had for disposal during the year 1946-47, 2,970 suits of which 2,590 were disposed of, leaving a balance of 380. The aggregate value of suits filed in the Village Courts amounted to Rs. 62,963, as against Rs. 52,938 in the previous year.[1]

After Merger—Constitution Of Panchayats

The foregoing will give an idea of the position of Panchayats in Travancore and Cochin on the eve of their merger. After their merger, the Congress Ministry enacted in 1950 the Travancore-Cochin Panchayats Act (II of 1950), which, in effect, was a combination of the good points in the Panchayat Acts prevalent in the merged states, and also an improvement upon their provisions. The salient features of this new Act are given below.

The Panchayats are formed on the basis of adult suffrage. Panchayats are formed primarily on the basis of one Panchayat for one village, but villages can be combined for the purpose, the basis being to cover a population of not less than 10,000 persons. In cases where a village is very extensive, it is divided to form two Panchayats. The Panchayat area is divided into wards, each of which elects one member through the system of ballot voting. In a Panchayat where 5 per cent or more of the population belongs to the scheduled castes or tribes, a seat is reserved for them and for this purpose the ward division of the Panchayat is so effected as to have a double-member ward, in which one seat is reserved and one seat is general. All other wards are single-member wards.

Panchayat Functions

The Panchayats have power to collect land cess, professional tax, licence fees, house tax, vehicles tax, etc., from Panchayat area subject to bye-laws approved by the Government. With the funds so collected the Panchayats have to attend to :

1. Minor public works and communications of the area;
2. The provision of good drinking-water facilities;
3. The lighting and sanitation of the locality;
4. Preservation of poromboke paths, lanes and canals and cattle-grazing grounds and other communal porombokes;
5. Opening and maintenance of public markets;
6. Control of fairs and festivals;
7. Control of dangerous and offensive trades;
8. Control of slaughter houses;
9. Control of cattle pounds;
10. Registration of births and deaths;
11. Improvement of agriculture and agricultural stock;

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[1] Ibid, p. 33.

12. Promotion of co-operative activities in the direction of cottage industries, distribution, marketing, etc.;
13. Primary education;
14. Relief of the poor and the sick;
15. The opening and maintenance of reading rooms and libraries;
16. Restoration and improvement of minor irrigation works;
17. Control of rest-houses, camp-sheds, etc., under its control;
18. Provision of community radio service;
19. Provision of medical aid, mid-wifery service, etc.; and
20. Other measures of public utility calculated to promote the safety, health, comfort or convenience of the inhabitants of the Panchayat area.

In addition to these, the Act also empowers the Government to authorise the Panchayat to exercise any power or discharge any functions other than the above.

Panchayat Finances

The sources of revenue to the Panchayats are land cess, professional tax, house tax, vehicle tax and licence fees, and these are collected after passing the bye-laws in a special meeting of the Panchayat and getting the same approved by the Government. The Act and the rules made thereunder contain specific provisions for the levy of these taxes and licence fees. The Act also provides for an yearly contribution to each Panchayat by the Government of an amount equal to the amount collected by the Panchayat during that particular year by levying rates, taxes and other fees, the maximum being limited to Rs. 2,000. Manual labour and other local contributions are also recognised and the value assessed in fixing the collections of the Panchayat. The Government may also give special grants for particular purposes, the restriction in such cases being that the amount should only be spent for that purpose.

The revenues collected by the Panchayat are remitted to the nearest Treasury in which the Panchayat has a P. D. account, and is treated as Panchayat Fund which is spent for meeting the expenses of the establishment of the Panchayat, such as, pay and allowances to staff, rent for office or construction of an office of its own, and meeting the requirements of the locality as detailed above, such as public works and communications, street-lighting, sweeping, appointment of mid-wife, radio service, etc.

The Panchayat Committee is empowered to sanction all non-recurring items of expenditure up to Rs. 100. For this, the Committee passes a resolution recommending that sanction may be accorded to meet a particular item of expenditure after providing for the same in the budget of the Panchayat. Any recurring expenditure upto Rs. 15 can be sanctioned by the Director of Panchayats and also a non-recurring expenditure upto Rs. 200. Any item of expenditure in excess has to be sanctioned by the Government. In the case of public works costing more than Rs. 100, an estimate has got to be prepared by the Assistant Engineer of Panchayats, and Government sanction obtained for the same if the cost exceeds Rs. 200. For works below Rs. 200, the sanction of the Director of Panchayats is sufficient. The Director of Panchayats has been given power to sanction amounts upto Rs. 10,000 for minor irrigation works in the Panchayats.

Judicial Aspect

The Panchayats of the State as such have no judicial functions. We have referred above to the Village Courts Act of Cochin (XII of 1118 M.E.). In 1950, the Congress Ministry made this Act applicable to the entire State of Travancore-Cochin. Under this Act, the Government nominates for each village a Village Court of five members. They are selected from the villagers themselves and work in an honorary capacity. Of these one is the President and another a Senior Judge. They can try suits upto a value of Rs. 100. With the consent of the parties concerned, a Village Court may also hear and determine suits the amount or value of which may be upto Rs. 200. The Act lays down the following provision regarding pronouncement of judgements by the Village Courts: "The Bench which heard the argument shall, after the arguments are closed, prepare and sign the decree to be passed in the case as shall appear to it to be just and equitable." The 'Bench' means a bench of three of the five members of the Court. The rate of Court fee payable in the Village Courts is lower than in the Civil Courts. Legal practitioners are not allowed to appear before it. A party, however, may appoint an agent to act and plead for him.

A Village Court can execute its decree either by arrest and detention of the judgement-debtor or by attachment and sale of movables belonging to him. A decree-holder may get his decree transferred to the Court of a District Munsif if he seeks to proceed against the immovable properties of his judgement-debtor. There is no appeal against judgements of the Village Court. But the Village Courts Registrar has been invested with the powers of a Court of Revision and an aggrieved party is free to approach him for revision of the judgement of the Village Court. The Registrar can set aside a decree or order of a Village Court on the ground of corruption, gross partiality or mis-conduct of any of the judges, or where the court acted without jurisdiction.

The Travancore-Cochin Village Courts have made justice quicker and cheaper and also succeeded in reducing litigation. There has, however, emerged a class of professional agents attached to the Village Courts.

The President is elected by members of the Panchayat Board. The Act provides for the appointment of an executive officer, but none has yet been appointed.

Panchayat Staff

The old Panchayats have got 1st and 2nd grade *Aminadar* clerks (in some instances both). There are also one or two peons according to the financial position of the Panchayat. The new Panchayats, having no sufficient funds to meet the pay and allowances of a full-time clerk, are allowed to have only part-time clerks and a full-time peon. These are being appointed by the Panchayat Committee and recommended for the Director's approval. The Director approves the appointment only if they are eligible. The pay and allowances are as follows :

	Pay	Allowances
1st Grade *Aminadar*	Rs. 20	Rs. 15
2nd Grade *Aminadar*	Rs. 15	Rs. 15
Part-time Clerk	..	Rs. 15
Peon	Rs. 11	Rs. 15

The Panchayats being newly constituted on a State-wide basis, the relation between the Panchayat and the regular administrative and revenue officers of the village is not yet defined. Resolutions are being passed by some Panchayats for the formation of joint committees with local Government officers so that the working of the Panchayat may go in harmony with the working of the Government departments. The question has to be considered in all its aspects before the Government takes final decision on the matter. The Executive Officer of the Panchayat Department alone inspect the Panchayat administration.

Control And Co-ordination

There is a separate Panchayat Department of the Government. In addition to the Director, who has State-wide jurisdiction, there are four Assistant Directors of Panchayats, one for each Revenue District. The Assistant Directors have practically no powers except to collect and forward the resolutions and periodical returns of the Panchayats to the Director for approval. But they have to visit the Panchayats and clear doubts regarding the working of the Panchayats and inspect records, registers, etc., report any irregularity observed to the Director of Panchayats. There are also some Panchayat Inspectors to help Assistant Directors. The Government alone possess power to supersede a Panchayat under certain conditions specified in Section 41 of the Act, viz., if a Panchayat is not competent to perform or persistently makes default in performing the duties imposed by law or exceeds or abuses its powers. The supersession is for a period not exceeding two years. During the period of supersession, all or any of the duties and powers of the Panchayat and its President may be exercised and discharged by the Director or other persons appointed by the Government. The Government shall be entitled to all the assets and subject to all the liabilities of the superseded Panchayat from the date of supersession till the date of re-constitution.

First Panchayat Elections—Party Basis

Under the new enactment, Panchayat elections were held in the State in April-June 1953. These elections were, unfortunately, fought on Party basis, and the chief contestants were the Congress, the Praja Socialist Party, and the Communists. State-wide elections to the 550 Panchayats—4,477 members—began with parts of northern Trichur district going to polls on April 21, 1953. The elections ended on June 30, 1953. The elections were keenly contested and the average percentage of voting was about 80 to 85 per cent. The Communists did not put up their candidates on Party label but sponsored a Democratic Front, called *Anadh Pandhya Munnani.* We have before us election results as on June 9, 1953. Out of 312 results till then announced, the Congress secured absolute majority in 147, and Communists or pro-Communist Independents had majority in 110 Panchayats. The P.S.P. had a majority in only 2 Panchayats. The Travancore Tamilnad Congress secured a clear majority in 16 Panchayats. In 37 Panchayats, no Party had any clear majority. Of the 2,519 candidates elected to the 312 Panchayats, 1,216 were Congressmen, 111 Travancore Tamilnad Congress, 77 Praja Socialists, 25 Revolutionary Socialists, 4 Kerala Socialists, 1 Cochin Party candidate, and 1,075 Independents.[1]

After The Elections

These Panchayats began functioning from August 15, 1953. Shri P. K. Kunju, then Minister for Local Self-Government, told the State Assembly on July 22, 1954, that the Panchayats in Travancore-Cochin number 548. He further told the Assembly that the Government had received representations that the effective working of the Panchayats was not possible unless they were given special grants, and this required an amendment of the Act, which question was receiving the attention of the Government.[1] Accordingly, on August 6, 1954, the State Assembly enacted the Travancore-Cochin Panchayat (Amendment) Bill. The Bill vested the Government with powers to put adequate funds at the disposal of Panchayats to carry out statutory functions, particularly relating to local development and minor irrigation works.

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[1] **Indian Express,** (Madras Edition), 10.6.'53.

On July 22, 1955, the Government passed a major order to give more powers to Panchayats and to reorganise the Panchayat Department. The Government had received numerous representations from the Panchayats for according to them more facilities and for preventing the delays of the Panchayat Department. Under this order, the Panchayats were empowered to accord administrative sanction to works costing Rs. 500 and below. Each of the 548 Panchayats in the State was given a special grant of Rs. 2,750, to be utilised for public works in the Panchayat area and for no other purpose. Further, with a view to ensuring proper and effective supervision and toning up the Panchayat administration, the Government sanctioned the appointment of 18 additional inspectors to the already existing 18. The Assistant Directors of Panchayats in the districts were re-designated Deputy Directors and were empowered to sanction all expenditure of a non-recurring and contingent nature upto Rs. 1,000 and to accord administrative sanctions to works whose estimates were Rs. 2,000 and below. The Government felt that there should be one overseer for every five Panchayats, and that they should have their headquarters in one of the Panchayats under them. Accordingly, the Government sanctioned the creation of 74 additional posts of Panchayats in addition to the 36 already existing. The Executive Engineer working in the office of the Director of Panchayats was directed to specifically superintend the proper execution of works pertaining to minor irrigation, communications, etc., in the Panchayat areas.

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[1] Hindu, 24.7.'54.

CHAPTER XXII

RAJASTHAN

RAJASTHAN, as at present constituted, was inaugurated by the late Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel on March 30, 1949. This area represents the whole of what was known as Rajputana in previous Census Reports minus the district of Abu, the states of Palanpur and Danta and tehsils Abu Road and Delwara. The State is bounded on the west and north-west by Pakistan. Punjab, PEPSU and Uttar Pradesh lie on its northern and north-eastern frontiers. The eastern boundary is formed by river Chambal. The southern boundary lies across the Central region of India dividing Rajasthan from Madhya Bharat and Bombay. The area of Rajasthan today is 1,30,207 square miles with a population 1,52,90,797. Rajasthan thus is the largest State of the Indian Union in area, with the exception of Madhya Pradesh (which is bigger only by 65 square miles), and occupies 10.26 per cent of the total area of the Indian Union.[1]

The Rajasthan Village

The normal village in Rajasthan is the compact type of a central inhabited nucleus situated mostly on a higher level sheltered by trees round which cluster the farms of the peasantry. Exceptions to this general rule occur in villages where there is great scope for cultivation, as a result of which new settlers from other places come and form new hamlets, thereby breaking up the unity of the old village site. But the vast majority of the 31,244 villages of Rajasthan have only one central inhabited area. The number of villages in previous decades in the area now constituting Rajasthan would be found in Table 113[2] (p. 520).

Dashora, after giving certain reasons for the fluctuations, rightly points out that no general comments would be justified on these figures as the formation of the villages has been largely a matter

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[1] Some interesting comparisons are provided. Thus, Rajasthan exceeds the combined area of 14 of the 28, or half the number of States in India, namely, Vindhya Pradesh, Saurashtra, Cutch, Himachal Pradesh, PEPSU, Travancore-Cochin, Manipur, Bhopal, Tripura, Ajmer, Coorg, Delhi, Bilaspur, Sikkim. Compared with some of the countries outside India, Rajasthan is larger than Hungary, Norway, the United Kingdom, Transval, Austria or Italy. The Rajasthan Dry Area Division alone is more than a quarter as large as England and Wales. The East Rajasthan Plain Division is nearly equal to either Scotland or Ireland. The Hills Division, the smallest of all, is larger than Belgium and nearly equal to Holland or Egypt. (**Census of India, 1951, Vol. X, Rajasthan and Ajmer, Part I-A, Report**, by Yamuna Lal Dashora, Jodhpur, 1953; p. 5).

[2] Ibid, p. 129.

TABLE 113

Years	No. of Villages
1891	30,261
1901	30,535
1911	32,406
1921	32,336
1931	33,584
1941	31,589
1951	31,244

of historical accident. The distribution of the villages in the Natural Divisions of Rajasthan is as under:

TABLE 114

State and Natural Division	Number of Villages
Rajasthan	31,244
East Rajasthan Plain Division	11,943
Dry Area Division	7,385
Hills Division	5,521
Plateau Division	6,395

Distribution Of Villages In Districts And By Size

The Chief Panchayat Officer of Rajasthan, in his Annual Report on the Working of Village Panchayats in Rajasthan for the year 1952-53, has given the following number of villages in the districts of Rajasthan :

TABLE 115

Name of District	Total No. of Villages	Name of District	Total No. of Villages
1. Jaipur	2,845	13. Kotah	2,313
2. Sawai-Madhopur	1,513	14. Jhalawar	1,490
3. Sikar	810	15. Bundi	732
4. Jhunjhunu	687	16. Jodhpur	1,240
5. Tonk	986	17. Pali	843
6. Bharatpur	1,838	18. Nagaur	1,188
7. Alwar	1,817	19. Jalore	686
8. Udaipur	3,064	20. Barmer	731
9. Chittorgarh	2,335	21. Sirohi	334
10. Bhilwara	1.596	22. Bikaner	490
11. Dungarpur	821	23. Ganganagar	1,353
12. Banswara	1,475	24. Churu	854

The total is slightly higher than that given in the Census Report, but the figures no doubt give an idea of the distribution of villages in the districts. Out of the total area of Rajasthan of 1,30,206 square miles, the rural area comprises 1,29,800 square miles, that is, 99 per cent of the total area. Out of the total population of 1,52,90,797 persons, 1,26,41,430 or 82.7 per cent live in villages and the remaining 26,49,367 live in cities. The average population per village according to the 1921 Census was 264, which rose to 287 in 1931, 360 in 1941 and 405 in 1951. From this the conclusion is drawn that the formation of villages is not keeping pace with the growth of population. Among the Natural Divisions, the population is highest in Rajasthan Dry Area Division (500) and lowest in Rajasthan Plateau Division (270). Among the districts, Pali has the highest population per village (677), and Jaisalmer the lowest (192).

The largest proportion of the rural population of Rajasthan (48.8 per cent) resides in medium-size villages (i.e., population between 500 and 2,000), 38.3 per cent in small villages (i.e., population less than 500), and 12.2 per cent in large villages (i.e., population of 2,000 to 5,000). There are only 12 very large villages in Rajasthan, that is, those with a population of more than 5,000.

Livelihood Pattern Of The General And Rural Population

The livelihood pattern of the general population of Rajasthan in the Natural Divisions would be found in the following table : [1]

TABLE 116

Rajasthan and Natural Division.	Number per 100 of total population belonging to	
	Agricultural Classes	Non-Agricultural Classes
Rajasthan	70.9	29.1
East Rajasthan Plain Division	69.8	30.2
Rajasthan Dry Area Division	68.7	31.3
Rajasthan Hills Division	77.4	22.6
Rajasthan Plateau Division	72.5	27.5

In the total rural population of Rajasthan, 50.90 per cent belong to agricultural Livelihood Class I, 26.13 per cent to Class II, 3.56 per cent to Class III, 1.75 per cent to Class IV. Livelihood pattern of the rural population in Rajasthan Natural Divisions would be found in Table 117 [2] (p. 522).

Low Proportion Of Agricultural Workers In Rajasthan

The high proportion of Livelihood Class I would be understood if it is borne in mind that among agricultural owners were counted

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[1] Ibid, p. 205.

[2] Ibid, p. 144.

TABLE 117

Natural Division	Persons per 10,000 of the rural population in Livelihood Class			
	I	II	III	IV
East Rajasthan Plain Division .	5,258	2,506	243	173
Rajasthan Dry Area Division ..	2,880	4,822	360	119
Rajasthan Hills Division ..	7,435	669	204	183
Rajasthan Plateau Division ..	6,745	330	859	293

not only the jagirdars but also the cultivating tenant who held the land in the jagirdar's estate. The low proportion of Class III, the agricultural labourers, it seems, has been a feature of Rajasthan in previous Censuses as well. In the adjusted area, farm servants and field labourers constituted 4.6 per cent in 1901, 6.3 per cent in 1911, and 5.5 per cent in 1921. The 1931 figures are not comparable and there was no occupational enumeration in the war-time Census of 1941. The General Village Survey of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry gives the following pattern of occupational distribution of families in the 37 villages surveyed by it :

TABLE 118[1]

Occupation and Status	Number of Families	Percentage to total number of families
Agricultural Owners	1,293	40.6
Agricultural Tenants	965	30.3
Agricultural Workers :		
(i) Without land ..	250) 350	7.9) 11.0
(ii) With land ..	100)	3.1)
TOTAL AGRICULTURAL FAMILIES	2,608	81.9
TOTAL NON-AGRICULTURAL FAMILIES	578	18.1
ALL FAMILIES	3,186	100.0

The difference in the percentages of agricultural workers as given by the 1951 Census (3.56) and by the General Village Survey (11.0) would be noticed. The General Family Survey found that nearly 72 per cent of the families were those of agricultural landowners and tenants and agricultural workers accounted for 9.3 per cent of the families. Says the Survey: "The small percentage may be due to the small size of holdings, low fertility of soil and difficulties of irrigation coupled with the precarious nature of rainfall. Moreover, the system of mutual help prevalent among the cultivators in a number of sample villages also obviated the necessity for hired labour."[2]

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[1] Agricultural Wages in India, Vol. I, Op. cit., p. 258.

[2] Rural Man-Power and Occupational Structure, Op. cit., p. 255.

Caste Composition

The caste composition was as follows: Nearly 53 per cent of the families belonged to scheduled castes and tribes, aboriginals and backward classes. Brahmins, Kshatriya and Vaishya families together formed 25.54 per cent of the families. The total number of families in the 37 villages surveyed were 3,166 with a total population of 15,566. Among the landholding families, 172 were Brahmins and 253 Kshatriyas. Nearly 57 per cent of the agricultural owners' families and 53 per cent of the agricultural tenant's families were scheduled castes, tribes, aboriginals and backward classes. Of the total agricultural worker's families, 70.7 per cent were drawn from these very classes, known in different parts of Rajasthan by the following names: *Kohli, Jat, Balaies, Chamar, Kori, Gujar, Meo, Jolha, Nai, Sage, Mali, Bhand, Rawat, Bawari, Regar, Mer, Naik, Nayak* and *Bhils.*

Size Distribution Of Agricultural Holdings

Now a few words about agricultural holdings in Rajasthan. The preponderance of Agricultural Livelihood Class I, that is, cultivators of land mainly or wholly owned, should be viewed in the background of the following remarks of the Rajasthan Census Report: [1] "There is no doubt that our agricultural holdings are very small." No complete data about sizes of landholdings in Rajasthan are available. The information given by the General Family Survey can be regarded as most informative. It found 2,123 holdings in the surveyed villages. While some families had joint holdings, others were landless. Of the total area of holdings, 42.7 per cent were owned, 50.2 per cent were rented and 7.1 per cent were given rent-free. The percentage distribution of the total number of holdings among the various classes of families was as follows: agricultural landowners 43.6, agricultural tenants 44.0, agricultural workers 4.3, non-agriculturists 8.1. Though the average size of holding for all families was 16.9 acres, there was a large concentration in the size groups 'between 1 and 7.5 acres' and 'between 10 and 25 acres.'[2]

Table 119 [3] (p. 524) as furnished by the Intensive Family Survey gives the percentage distribution of holdings according to size groups in the five zones in which the State was divided for purposes of the survey.

Thus, nearly 47 per cent of the holdings were below 10 acres, which, in Rajasthan, would be for the most part considered an un-

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[1] Op. cit., p. 216.

[2] **Rural Man-Power and Occupational Structure,** Op. cit., pp. 273-274.

[3] **Report on Intensive Survey of Agricultural Labour, Vol. VII, North-West India,** Agricultural Labour Enquiry, Ministry of Labour, Govt. of India, Delhi, 1955; p. 15.

TABLE 119

Size groups	Zone-I Jaipur	Zone-II Jodhpur	Zone-III Udaipur	Zone-IV Bikaner	Zone-V Kotah	State
(i) Below 1 acre ..	4.2	0.2	5.4	..	7.8	3.3
(ii) 1 acre to 5 acres ..	32.2	8.1	30.4	1.8	20.5	22.3
(iii) 5 acres to 10 acres ..	25.8	12.5	32.1	5.8	17.8	21.4
(iv) 10 acres to 25 acres ..	28.5	37.9	29.7	47.6	32.6	33.3
(v) 25 acres and above ..	9.3	41.3	2.4	44.8	21.3	19.7
Average size of holding ..	10.9	25.7	8.0	35.9	19.4	16.9

economic holding. It may be borne in mind that 60 per cent of the agricultural labour families were landless. The remaining 40 per cent of the families held 4.3 per cent of the total holdings, the large majority of which (75 per cent) was taken on lease.

Panchayats In Old Rajasthan

The pre-covenanting princely states of Rajasthan had passed legislations for establishing Village Panchayats. These were :

1. Marwar Gram Panchayat Act, 1945.
2. Bikaner Gram Panchayat Act, 1928. ✓
3. Bharatpur Village Panchayat Act, 1944.
4. Karauli Village Panchayat Act, 1939.
5. Jaipur Village Panchayat Act, 1948.
6. Sirohi Village Panchayat Act, 1947.
7. Mewar Gram Panchayat Act, 1940.

Besides these, there were Panchayat Acts in force in some other covenanting states, e.g., Kotah, Bundi, Jhalawad, Tonk, Shahpura, etc. Under the autocracy of the princely rulers, however, and with an inefficient and corrupt administrative machinery in these feudatories, it is hardly surprising that no development worth the name of the Panchayat institution was observed. The United States of Rajasthan (now better known as former Rajasthan) was inaugurated in 1948, comprising Mewar and some other princely states, with its capital at Udaipur. Its Chief Minister was Shri Manikya Lal Varma, a veteran of states people's struggles, hero of the famous Bijolia *Satyagraha,* and highly respected by all. One of his very first acts was to promulgate the Panchayat Raj Ordinance of 1948, modelled mostly on the Mewar Gram Panchayat Act of 1945. A unique feature of this Ordinance was that it introduced the system of group Panchayats instead of sticking to the old policy of one Panchayat for each village. Following this Ordinance, elected Panchayats came into being in various villages of the former feudatories of Udaipur, Kotah, Partapgarh, Kushalgarh, Banswada, Dungarpur, etc. Thus, 790 Panchayats came into existence[1] in 13,656 villages of former Rajasthan.

Panchayat Development In New Rajasthan

A year later, in 1949, the states of Jaipur, Jodhpur, Bharatpur, Bikaner, etc., were joined together to form what was then called Maha Rajasthan, now famous as Rajasthan, with Jaipur as Capital. At the time of this merger, besides the Panchayats in existence in old Rajasthan, Jaipur had 319 Panchayats, Jodhpur 251, Bharatpur 337, and Bikaner 264 Panchayats. A Chief Panchayat Officer had been appointed by the Manikya Lal Ministry, and he continued to work in the new set-up as well. In 1949, the Rajasthan Panchayats had an income of Rs. 2 lakhs, out of which Rs. 60,000 were spent on the establishment and staff of Panchayats, Rs. 80,000 for public utility works, leaving a balance of Rs. 60,000. 31,333 suits of all types were filed before the Panchayats out of which 20,543 were disposed of. Sixty-seven central and branch libraries were opened by the Panchayats which received a grant of Rs. 27,610 from the Government for the purpose. With a view to training Panches and Sarpanches, four training centres were run by the Panchayat Department at Mandal (Udaipur), Phalua (Jodhpur), Dig (Jaipur), and Churu (Bikaner). About 2,000 Panches and Sarpanches were thus trained. Later, a conference of Panches and Sarpanches was held at a place called Kapasan under the presidentship of the then Minister for Local Self-Government. This Conference discussed various Panchayat problems—municipal and judicial work, financial aspects, etc., and on the whole had a healthy effect on Panchayat development in the State. By the end of 1952-53, 19,811 villages had been covered all over the State by 2,943 Panchayats, as would be seen in Table 120[2] (p. 526).

Income And Expenditure Of Panchayats

The number of Panchayats in the preceding year, that is, 1951-52, was 2,724, and they covered 17,574 villages. Thus in 1952-53, 219 new Panchayats were constituted. More than 1,000 by-elections and re-elections were held in 1951-52, and 1,174 in 1952-53, by the simple method of show of hands. A feature of the elections was the enthusiasm shown by women. There was, on the whole, absence of communalism in the elections, and the main burden of propaganda was to elect the best, the most honest

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[1] We base ourselves on an article published in **Panchayat**, official journal of the Rajasthan Gram Panchayat Department, (Vol. 1, No. 3-4, Nov.-Dec. 1954, p. 11). In a subsequent para, however, this figure is given as 451. We are not sure of the exact position. This, incidentally, underlines the low level of official Panchayat journalism of some States. We will have to say some more on Panchayat journalism in a subsequent chapter.

[2] Source : Annual Report of the Chief Panchayat Officer on the Working of Village Panchayats in Rajasthan for the year 1952-53.

TABLE 120

Name of District		Total No. of villages	No. of Village Panchayats	No. of villages over which Panchayats have jurisdiction
1.	Jaipur ..	.. 2,845	148	453
2.	Sawai Madhopur	.. 1,513	100	981
3.	Sikar ..	.. 810	46	129
4.	Jhunjhunu	.. 687	90	687
5.	Tonk ..	.. 986	75	986
6.	Bharatpur	.. 1,838	563	572
7.	Alwar	.. 1,817	..	..
8.	Udaipur	.. 3,064	172	3,064
9.	Chittorgarh	.. 2,335	104	2,335
10.	Bhilwara	.. 1,596	119	1,596
11.	Dungarpur	.. 821	45	821
12.	Banswara	.. 1,475	60	1,475
13.	Kotah ..	.. 2,313	163	2,313
14.	Jhalawar	.. 1,490	119	1,490
15.	Bundi	.. 732	52	731
16.	Jodhpur	.. 1,240	140	258
17.	Pali ..	.. 843	149	207
18.	Nagaur	.. 1,188	161	327
19.	Jalore	.. 686	94	194
20.	Barmer	.. 731	91	153
21.	Sirohi	.. 334	66	334
22.	Bikaner	.. 490	57	103
23.	Ganganagar	.. 1,353	209	322
24.	Churu	.. 854	120	280
	Total	.. 32,040	2,943	19,811

persons. The income and expenditure of Panchayats during 1951-52 and 1952-53 would be found in Table 121 (p. 527).

Thus, from Rs. 18,29,994 in 1951-52, Panchayat income rose to Rs. 23,13,353 in 1952-53, including the balance of Rs. 5,26,464 of the previous year. The increase was due partly to the formation of new Panchayats, the vigilance of Panches in raising their income and avoiding wasteful expenditure, and from cattle pounds which were transferred to the Panchayats after the formation of Rajasthan. In 1952-53, while administrative charges accounted for Rs. 8,58,344, Rs. 4,16,510 were spent on works of public utility. The higher percentage of expenditure on administration would be noted. For lack of a unified and effective Panchayat legislation, the Panchayats of Jaipur, Jodhpur and Bikaner Division spent

TABLE 121

	1951-52	1952-53
INCOME	Rs.	Rs.
1. Balance from previous year ..	3,71,183	5,26,464
2. Grant from State Revenue ..	1,08,781	91,586
3. Other items :		
(i) Court fees ..	2,78,000	3,74,479
(ii) Fines	3,89,000	3,33,356
(iii) Taxation including *Mela* income	1,61,000	2,33,839
(iv) Cattle pounds ..	4,31,000	5,73,177
(v) Miscellaneous ..	91,000	1,80,450
Total ..	18,29,964	23,13,353
EXPENDITURE		
1. Administrative charges ..	6,49,000	8,58,344
2. Health Services ..	2,24,000	2,25,593
3. Education	56,300	1,30,031
4. Other public utility works such as lighting, repairs of feather weather roads, village tanks, wells, etc.	3,21,000	4,16,510
5. Panchayat Libraries ..	53,200	64,477
Total ..	13,03,500	16,94,957

more over administrative charges and less over public utility works. In fact the financial position of the Panchayats varied with different units. This is to be traced to the fact that Panchayats till then worked under as many as seven different Panchayats Acts, viz., Old Rajasthan, Jodhpur, Bikaner, Jaipur, Sirohi, Bharatpur and Karauli. In some of these Acts, there was practically no provision for Panchayat finances.

Absence Of Unified Panchayat Legislation

By the end of 1952-53, Rajasthan, though without a unified Panchayat legislation had 30,824 Panches, 2,943 Sarpanches, and an equal number of Up-Sarpanches. The Panchayat Department held in 1952-53 seven training camps at Daikheda (Bundi district), Dhasuk (Jaipur district), Bhandarej (Dausa circle of Jaipur Division), Shri Chattarpur (Jhalwar district), Ratangarh (Churu district), Bedla (Udaipur district) and Mandore (Jodhpur district). In all these camps, 2,760 Sarpanches and Panches of 507 Panchayats having jurisdiction over 2,970 villages, i.e., about 10 per cent of total number of villages in Rajasthan, participated. These training camps also acted as conferences where resolutions were passed drawing the attention of the Government to various difficulties facing the Panchayats and demanding suitable action. These related to more powers for Panchayats in matters of education, public health and sanitation, judicial functions, Panchayat finances, etc.

In short, the need for a unified Panchayat legislation for the entire State became more and more pressing. It would appear that this fact was emphasised even in 1949, when Maha Rajasthan was inaugurated, but somehow the matter continued to be postponed. Such a legislation was enacted by the State Assembly in 1953 and after receiving the President's assent, was enforced on January 1, 1954. We will now describe the salient features of this Act.

Constitution Of Panchayats: Obligatory And Discretionary Functions

Panchayats in Rajasthan are formed at the general meeting of voters by show of hands. Election is on the basis of adult suffrage. Neighbouring villages with a population of 5,000 are combined to constitute one Panchayat circle, which is divided into wards, each ward returning, as far as possible, one member. If scheduled castes and tribes live in the Panchayat circle, and are not elected, there is provision for their nomination. The Sarpanch is also elected by the entire electorate of the village.

The obligatory functions of Panchayats are :

1. Construction, repair and maintenance of public wells, tanks and ponds for supply of water for drinking, washing and bathing purposes;

2. Construction, repair, maintenance, cleansing and lighting of public streets;

3. Sanitation and taking curative and preventive measures to remove and stop the spread of epidemics;

4. Medical relief;

5. Upkeep, protection and supervision of any building or property vesting in the Panchayat;

6. Registration of births, deaths and marriages;

7. Removal of encroachments on public streets, public places, and property vested in the Panchayat;

8. Regulation of places for the disposal of the dead bodies of human beings, animals, and other offensive matter;

9. Regulation of *melas*, markets and *hats* in the Panchayat circle except those managed by the State Government;

10. Establishment and maintenance of primary schools for boys and girls;

11. Establishment, management and care of common grazing grounds and other common lands;

12. Regulation of the construction of new buildings or extension of existing ones;

13. Assistance in the development of agriculture, commerce and industry;

14. Assistance in extinguishing fire and protecting life and property;

15. Maternity and child welfare;

16. Management and maintenance of cattle pounds;

17. Regulation, collection, removal and disposal of manure and sweepings; and

18. Construction and maintenance of public latrines.

The discretionary functions of the Panchayats are :

1. Planting and maintenance of trees at the side of public streets and in other public places;
2. Improvement of cattle breeds and prevention of their diseases;
3. Filling in insanitary pits and levelling of land;
4. Organisation of a Village Volunteer Force for watch and ward duties;
5. Development of co-operation and establishment of improved seed and implement stores;
6. Relief against famine and other calamities;
7. Extension and development of the village *abadi* area;
8. Establishment and maintenance of *akharas* and other places for recreation and games;
9. Prohibiting or regulating the curing, tanning, and dyeing of skins within 220 yards of the *abadi* area;
10. Promotion of goodwill and social harmony;
11. Installing of public radio sets and gramophones;
12. Prohibiting or regulating of brick or lime kilns within 220 yards of the *abadi* area;
13. Establishment and maintenance of libraries and reading rooms;
14. Maintenance of stud bulls;
15. Relief of the destitute and the sick;
16. Promotion, improvement and encouragement of cottage industries; and
17. Location of wine shops and slaughter houses.

The following are the existing sources of revenue of the Panchayats :

1. Fees and fines realised from cattle pounds;
2. Income from court fees and fines imposed;
3. Sale of bones of dead animals; and
4. Income from *melas* and cattle fairs.

Panchayat Revenue And Expenditure

Under the Rajasthan Panchayat Act, 1953, the Panchayats can levy the following taxes:

1. A tax on the rent payable for the use or occupation of agricultural land not exceeding half an anna in a rupee of such rent, such tax being payable by the person or persons severally or jointly in cultivatory possession of such land or in receipt of *sayar* income therefrom;
2. A tax on rent received by any landholder on account of the use or occupation of agricultural land not exceeding half anna in a rupee of such rent, such tax being payable by a person or persons severally or jointly receiving such rent;
3. A tax on the assumed rental value of *khudkasht* or *hawala* land calculated in accordance with the provisions of the law relating to land revenue in force, at the rate not exceeding half anna in a rupee of such value, payable by persons severally or jointly holding such land;
4. A tax on trade, calling and professions according to prescribed rates;
5. A tax on buildings owned by persons who do not pay any of the aforesaid taxes, according to prescribed rates;
6. Entertainment tax;
7. Vehicle tax except on those vehicles which are used for the purpose of cultivation;
8. A tax on industries;
9. A tax for arranging the supply of drinking water within the Panchayat circle;
10. Any other tax with the previous sanction of the Government.

Besides these taxes, the Government gives grants for carrying out public utility works, provided the Panchayats undertake to collect half the amount of the estimated expenditure.

The general principle provided for Panchayat expenditure is that out of the total income of the Panchayats, 40 per cent should be spent on administrative charges while 60 per cent should be spent over sanitation, light, repairs of roads and drinking water wells, free distribution of medicines and such other public utility works. In special cases the administrative expenditure is allowed up to 50 per cent, but in no case it is allowed to exceed this limit. The administrative expenditure includes pay of clerks, peons, cattle pound *chaukidars*, contingencies and other establishment expenditure. The Panchayats have to submit their budget estimates under different heads of income and expenditure. Once the budget has been sanctioned by the Panchayat Department, the Panchayat has the full power to carry on its activities within sanctioned amounts.

The Sarpanch has to carry on Panchayat administration with the help of a paid secretary or clerk. Mostly the Panchayat staff consist of a whole-time or part-time secretary and a peon. The secretary is appointed by the Panchayat with the formal approval of the Chief Panchayat Officer. In other cases, this approval is not necessary. The Panchayats get their demands recovered through the revenue agency under the Rajasthan Public Demands Recovery Act.

Control And Coordination

The Panchayat Act does not provide for any co-ordination between the Panchayats and Administrative Departments. In all matters falling within their purview, the Panchayats deal with the Chief Panchayat Officer. In their day-to-day dealings they correspond directly with the various departments.

In Rajasthan, after integration, there were only 8 District Boards. No co-ordination exists between them and the Panchayats. The Rajasthan District Boards Act has now been passed, which envisages the establishment of District Boards in every district. The electoral college for election to the District Boards will be the Panches and Sarpanches. Rules are being framed to provide for co-ordination between these Boards and the Panchayats.

A novel feature of Rajasthan is the provision for Tehsil Panchayats. The Panches and Sarpanches of all the Panchayats in a tehsil form the electoral college for a Tehsil Panchayat. Tehsil Panchayats exercise not only controlling or supervisory functions over the Panchayats, but also appellate jurisdiction.

The State Government has a separate Panchayat Department to look after the Panchayats, headed by a Chief Panchayat Officer. He works under the direct supervision of the Local Self-Government Department. There are Divisional Panchayat Officers for each division assisted by District Panchayat Inspectors and Assistant Panchayat Inspectors. For every 50 Panchayats, an extra Assistant Inspector is appointed. The Panchayat Department has the power to supersede a Panchayat with the concurrence of the Government. Supersession is only for reasons of incompetence, default or abuse of powers. When a Panchayat is superseded, an *ad hoc* committee is appointed to carry on Panchayat functions. It is mandatory to hold re-election within six months.

There are no separate Nyaya Panchayats in Rajasthan. The Gram Panchayats carry on the judicial functions as well. Chapter IV (Sections 28 to 62) of the Rajasthan Panchayat Act defines these judicial powers of Gram Panchayats in criminal and civil matters. In criminal cases, it can impose a fine upto Rs. 50. Panchayats cannot try a person previously convicted for a term of three years and upwards, or previously sentenced by any Panchayat for theft, etc. A person bound over under Sections 109 or 110 or a habitual criminal or a registered member of a criminal tribe can also not be tried by a Panchayat. No Panchayat can inflict a substantive sentence of imprisonment. In civil matters, Gram Panchayats have jurisdiction concurrent with that of the civil court within the Panchayat circle. It can entertain suits for damages, compensation, etc., not exceeding Rs. 100. In criminal cases, personal attendance of the parties is obligatory, but it can dispense with such personal attendance if it deems fit. In civil suits, parties are permitted to appear through agents. Schedule One of the Rajasthan Panchayat Act gives a list of 50 offences under the Indian Penal Code which can be taken cognizance of by the Gram Panchayats. Besides these, the Panchayats can also try offences under the Cattle Trespass Act (1871), Vaccination Act (1880), Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1890), Rajasthan Public Gambling Ordinance (1949), Rajasthan Prevention of Juvenile Smoking Act (1950), offences under the Panchayat Act or the rules made thereunder, and offence under any law declared by the State Government to be triable by a Panchayat.

In 1951-52, the Gram Panchayats in Rajasthan were required to decide 1,40,214 suits of all types (including a balance of 31,116 from the previous year), of which 1,19,095 were disposed of, leaving a balance of 21,119 for 1952-53. A total of 3,072 revisions were filed, out of which 1,575 were decided. In 1952-53, out of a total of 1,65,553 suits of all types filed, Panchayats decided 1,23,648 suits, leaving a balance of 41,905 for the next year. In the same year 3,540 revisions were filed of which 2,012 were decided. In 1955, according to Shri Hari Singh[1], the Chief Panchayat Officer, the Panchayats disposed of a total of 1,01,744 cases (civil and criminal), the greater portion of which were compromised. A very small number of revisions were filed before Tehsil Panchayats, which in 85 per cent cases upheld Panchayat decisions. Only 25 per cent cases went up in appeal to District and Session Judges against the decision of Tehsil Panchayats, 90 per cent of whose decisions were upheld. In the same year, Panchayats disposed of 58,648 Executive Cases; revisions were filed before Tehsil Panchayats in very few cases, and in 88 per cent cases, Panchayat decisions were upheld.

Work Done By Rajasthan Panchayats

The Panchayats in Rajasthan, it is obvious from a perusal of the Rajasthan dailies and innumerable weeklies, and more specially of *Panchayat*, a monthly published by the State Panchayat Department, are very much up and active, and have aroused the genuine interest of the rural masses in themselves. We have no statistical statement before us, as in the case of some other States, detailing the work done by Panchayats. The field of work relate to repair and construction of roads, health and sanitation, and lighting. They have got large numbers of people injected and vaccinated and successfully fought the tendency of the villagers to avoid them. The Panchayats are running 96 Ayurvedic dispensaries. In 1955, they spent Rs. 1,35,000 on medicines from their funds. They have also made significant contribution to the spread of literacy. Village schools have now been taken over by the Education Department, but Panchayats continue to take interest in them. There are at present 700 non-Government schools run by Panchayats where 30,000 adults and boys are learning. The Panchayats incurred a total expenditure of Rs. 1,50,000 on these schools in 1955 from their funds, and an equal amount was contributed by the villagers. Panchayat buildings, school buildings and Gandhi *Chabutras* have been constructed by them. Some Panchayats have taken initiative in opening new markets for the supply of village needs. About 300 Panchayats of the State have radio sets. They have also otherwise made efforts for people's recreation. Lakhs of trees have been planted by them and innumerable compost pits dug.[1]

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[1] See article by him entitled 'Rajasthan Men Panchayaton Ka Vikas' (i.e., Growth of the Panchayat Institution in Rajasthan) **Panchayat, Vol. 2, No. 6 of February, 1956.**

Three Distinctive Features Of Rajasthan Panchayats

We would draw special attention to three features of Rajasthan Panchayats. The attention devoted to training of Panches and Sarpanches in Rajasthan deserves commendation. We have referred to the training camps conducted in 1951-52 and 1952-53. In 1954-55, 13 Panch-Sarpanch Conferences and training camps were organised. 7,600 Panches and Sarpanches of 711 Panchayats participated in these camps. These Conferences and camps were held at Kanwas (Kotah district), Bayana and Dig (Bharatpur district), Mookam and Mahajan (Bikaner district) Hindaun (Sawai Madhopur district), Harsana and Barod (Alwar district), Kolana (Ganganagar district), Barunghan (Bundi district), and at district headquarters of Tonk, Sikar and Alwar. Representatives from one-third of the total number of Panchayats in Rajasthan came to these camps. In the course of these camps, the Panchayat legislations were explained, their judicial powers discussed, and methods for carrying on Panchayat work clarified. They were addressed by State Ministers and others. After collective discussion, the Panches also adopted resolutions making suggestions for improvement of Panchayat work and demanding certain facilities, funds, etc., from the Government.

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[1] We regret that considerations of space prevent us from describing the valuable work by Panchayats at the district level. Those interested may refer to files of the **Panchayat**, monthly of the State Panchayat Department. Thus, the October-November 1955 (Vol. 2, No. 2-3) issue carries report of a Village Panchayat in Village Rengas. December-January 1955-56 (Vol. 2, Nos. 4 and 5) carries illuminating reports of Panchayat work in districts Bhilwara and Bharatpur. Similar other reports can be usefully perused for more detailed study of Panchayat functioning in Rajasthan.

The next remarkable thing about Panchayats in the State is the attention given to the development of village libraries. This matter has received the sustained attention of the Government, and the results can be nothing but beneficial. In 1951-52, 135 Government-aided Panchayat libraries functioned. The amount spent on them was Rs. 53,200, out of which an amount of Rs. 27,956 was given by the Government as subsidy. Over and above this, the Panchayats maintained 150 reading rooms independent of Government aid. In 1955, the number of libraries and reading rooms maintained by the Panchayats reached 1,500, out of which 133 received aid from the Government. Of the libraries and reading rooms not aided by the Government, half the expenses are met by the Panchayats from their own funds, and the remaining half is given by the villagers of the Panchayat circle.

Thirdly, Rajasthan Panchayats deserve commendation for their work relating to rural water supply. Unfortunately, in Rajasthan, the rural public suffers either from scarcity or ill-management of this cardinal necessity of life in a major portion. The Central and State Governments have shown a keen awareness of this problem of the rural masses, and a sum of Rs. 1 crore was provided in the First Five-Year Plan for the purpose. The criterion adopted for the scheme is that for obtaining a grant-in-aid of Rs. 100, the Panchayats should arrange to contribute Rs. 33 in cash or through labour. In 1953-54, a sum of Rs. 6,47,000 (including Rs. 1 lakh sanctioned earlier but not advanced), was given to the Panchayats for the work. In this year, 472 drinking water supply schemes were completed. In 1954-55, a sum of Rs. 25 lakhs was advanced for the purpose and 1,528 drinking water supply schemes were completed. The schemes related to the construction of new wells, tanks, etc., and repairs of existing ones. This work provided great incentive to the villagers and brought out their best. There was willing contribution in the form of cash and *Shramadan*.

Elections Under The New Act

After the enforcement of the Rajasthan Panchayat Act in 1954, work was taken in hand for the election of Panchayats in 17 districts, where the Panchayat institution had not developed, as also in those areas of old Rajasthan where the Panchayats which had been formed were not representative. The number of Panchayat circles fixed for the 17 districts would be found in the following table :

TABLE 122

S. No.	District	No. of new Panchayat circles
1.	Jaipur	249
2.	Bharatpur	183
3.	Alwar	165
4.	Sawai Madhopur	163
5.	Tonk (except Tonk Sub-Division)	90
6.	Sikar	135
7.	Jhunjhunu	116
8.	Ganganagar	211
9.	Churu	108
10.	Bikaner	85
11.	Jodhpur	173
12.	Jaisalmer	80
13.	Pali	159
14.	Jalore	116
15.	Barmer	125
16.	Nagaur	225
17.	Sirohi	76
	TOTAL	2,449

Including some areas in old Rajasthan, elections under the new Act were held in 3,275 Panchayat circles. Thus, 40,152 Panches and 3,275 Sarpanches were elected. At the same time, elections to 185 Tehsil Panchayats, out of a total of 211 tehsils were completed, 1,295 Panches and 185 Sarpanches of Tehsil Panchayats were thus elected.

We have no detailed reports about these elections. Based upon adult franchise and covering the greater part of the State, they can be regarded as the biggest experiment in direct democracy which Rajasthan ever had in its hoary and eventful history. The elections apparently were on the whole peaceful, and we have not come across reports of any serious conflicts and caste oppression. The matter, however, requires further study.

Panchayats And Top Officials: A Peculiar Difficulty And A Sound Advice

We have, however, come across a rather novel difficulty relating to Panchayat administration in the State. Peculiar as it is, it relates to conflicts between the top officials of the State. This came into sharp relief at a conference of District Collectors held at Jaipur in December 1954. According to a correspondent[1], the State's Chief Minister, Shri Mohanlal Sukhadia, "was perturbed over reports that an atmosphere of distrust prevails between the Panchayat and the Revenue administration." On Shri Sukhadia's suggestion, the problem was thoroughly discussed by the senior officers, and "their unanimous feeling was that the powers at present exercised by the Chief Panchayat Officer should in a number of cases be delegated to the Collector." The Chief Panchayat Officer, Shri Hari Singh, in his Annual Report on the Working of Village Panchayats in Rajasthan for the year 1952-53, has recorded : "The next difficulty in the working of Panchayats is the dearth of co-operation of the officials as a class. The officials, who are mostly of aristocratic mentality and who are born and brought up in urban life and culture, generally treat this institution as an organisation which encroaches upon their power and position which they have been enjoying for the last many decades. It is high time when a change in their angle of vision should take place. This infant democratic institution should be given proper assistance by all officers."

We are not, however, possessed of fuller details to express ourselves in any definite manner on the question. Among the points in dispute, one related to the inspection of Panchayat courts, over which probably the District Collector and his sub-ordinate magistrates possessed no power of inspection, which was exercised by officers of the State Panchayat Department. Under the present scheme of development activities everywhere, the primacy of the District Collector has to be conceded, and this point, according to the correspondent's report, was made clear by Shri Sukhadia. This, however, need not become a cause for disputes between officials. The State Panchayat Officers can play an important role even when the Collector's authority is duly exercised. The causes may be sought elsewhere. It is not for us to say. Nor are we aware of the subsequent developments. We would, however, quote an advice given by Shri Manikya Lal Varma, the first Chief Minister of old Rajasthan. He is reported to have said :[2] "The people do not learn the use of rights when rights are kept away from them. The people develop the strength to use their rights when they are allowed to exercise those rights. Everyone commits mistakes, and not to confer rights in fear of these mistakes, would be a bigger mistake. Institutions who work, should be given full freedom to work. There should be no attempt to throttle them." This, we believe, is a most sensible advice which the officials must follow in dealing with the Panchayats.

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[1] **Hindustan Times Evening News, 11.1.'55.**

[2] Quoted by Rajasthan's Chief Panchayat Officer, Hari Singh in Radio talk from Jaipur; See **Panchayat, Vol. 2, No. 6, of February 1956, p. 7.**

CHAPTER XXIII

MADHYA BHARAT

ADDRESSING the Plenary Session of the Local Self-Government Ministers Conference at Simla on June 27, 1954, Dr. Kailash Nath Katju, then Union Minister for Home Affairs, paid a rich tribute to the Village Panchayats of Madhya Bharat. Said Dr. Katju : "I have had the advantage of touring Madhya Bharat in the last month and they have got their Panchayats everywhere and I was delighted to see them working. When I asked the people whether they had Harijans, they said that they had two, three and so on. I asked them whether they had women on the Panchayats, and they said 'yes.' At one meeting a village woman came along and spoke on the mike, a very able woman."

Dr. Katju's remarks are rightly deserved by the State. Practically all the villages in the State have been covered by Village Panchayats. In its present form, the State was inaugurated on May 28, 1948. Soon after, in 1949, the Madhya Bharat Panchayat Act was passed and a vigilant administration amended it in the light of experience gained in 1951 and again in 1953.

Inaugurating the State on May 28, 1948, Prime Minister, Shri Nehru, said : "Madhya Bharat is full of great episodes in India's history. This new State must draw inspiration from that past history and at the same time look to the future when we have to make history. Progress can only come through unity of efforts for great causes."

The are, population and revenue of the covenanting princely states that merged into Madhya Bharat would be found in the Table 123 (p. 538).

The State of Madhya Bharat lies across the central portion of the Indian Peninsula. While in the north and north-east, the river Chambal divides it from Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, in the south-west, its boundary lies with Bombay State. The area of the State is 46,478 square miles with a population of 79,54,154. The density of population is 171 persons per square mile. The State is divided into 16 districts comprising 80 tehsils and 23 *tappas*. Nimar is the largest district having an area of 5,133 square miles and 7,58,694 inhabitants. The smallest district is Indore with an area of 1,563 square miles, and the least populous is Bhilsa with only 2,93,023 inhabitants. Table 124 (p. 538) shows the area and population of different districts in the State according to the 1951 Census.

TABLE 123

State	Area sq. miles	Population	Revenue
Gwalior	26,387	40,06,150	3,85,50,000
Indore	9,934	15,13,966	2,68,55,900
Dhar	1,800	2,53,210	24,60,000
Jhabua	1,336	1,26,117	14,50,000
Barwani	1,178	1,76,666	16,70,000
Rajgarh	962	1,48,648	10,79,000
Alirajpur	836	1,12,754	9,99,000
Narsingarh	734	1,25,278	9,51,000
Ratlam	693	1,78,327	19,71,000
Jaora	602	1,25,072	18,96,000
Dewas (Senior)	449	80,352	10,50,000
Dewas (Junior)	419	83,689	20,67,000
Sailana	297	42,218	3,00,000
Khilchipur	273	48,648	4,00,000
Sitamau	262	33,461	2,71,000
Mathwara	189	3,888	14,000
Kurwai	142	29,538	4,08,000
Jobat	131	50,945	79,000
Piploda	72	11,478	1,09,000
Kathiawara	70	6,798	41,000

TABLE 124

District	Area in square miles	Population 1951
Bhind	1,684	5,27,978
Morena	4,450	6,33,581
Gird-Gwalior	2,027	5,30,299
Goona	4,264	4,78,810
Shivpuri	4,041	4,76,092
Bhilsa	1,976	2,93,023
Rajgarh	2,377	4,27,523
Shajapur	2,325	4,33,216
Dewas	2,761	3,45,306
Indore	1,563	5,96,622
Ujjain	2,313	5,44,260
Ratlam	1,686	3,83,894
Mandsaur	4,160	6,36,915
Dhar	3,183	5,05,268
Jhabua	2,535	3,82,673
Nimar	5,133	7,58,694

Distribution Of Population In Villages Of Different Sizes

Out of the total population of the State, 65,12,923 is rural, living in 19,866 villages.[1] The urban population of 14,41,231 lives in 67 towns. Thus the persons enumerated in rural areas and those enumerated in urban areas were roughly in the proportion of 452 : 100. The proportion in 1931 and 1941 in rural and urban areas as now constituted was respectively 661 and 567 to 100. A village ordinarily means all the area demarcated for revenue purposes as a *mauza*, and includes all the hamlets within that area but does not include (i) uninhabited *mauzas,* and (ii) *mauzas* or part of *mauzas* which form part of the area of a town or city.

The proportion of rural population is lower in Madhya Bharat than in other States of India except Bombay. The average is 819 per mille of the general population. Within the State, this proportion varies considerably from district to district—912 in the Hills Division, 816 in Lowland and 786 in Plateau. In 11 out of 16 districts, the proportion exceeds the State's average. Jhabua with 980 per mille is entirely rural, followed by Bhind and Shivpuri with 954 per mille. In Indore only 396 persons out of 1,000 live in villages, and thus it is the least rural or the most urban district followed by Gird (532), Ujjain (676), Ratlam (707) and Mandsaur (809).

The average population of a village in Madhya Bharat is 328 persons. In the Plateau it is 292, in the Lowland 468 and in the Hills 336. Among the districts, Bhind has the largest average population per village (559), and Goona the smallest (225). Villages with less than 500 population predominate. Out of 19,866 villages, 16,431 belong to this class. The next higher group of villages (population between 500 and 1,000) number 2,495, and those with a population between 1,000 and 2,000 number 730. Only 208 villages have a population between 2,000—5,000. Only two localities with a population of over 5,000 (Rajoda in Ambah tehsil of Morena district and Gandhi Nagar colony in Mandsaur district) have been treated as villages. The greater part of the rural population, nearly 500 out of every 1,000 rural population, live in villages of under 500 inhabitants. About 410 per 1,000 of the rural population live in villages with population between 500 and 2,000. Villages in the 2,000—5,000 group contain 92 per 1,000, while those in the group 5,000 and over have only 2 per mille.

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[1] This number is as given by the Census Report of the State. In its reply to the Questionnaire of the Congress Village Panchayats Committee, the State Government says that the number is 21,900. We do not know how to account for this difference.

The Livelihood Pattern

In Madhya Bharat, out of every 10,000 persons of the general population, 7,222 or 72.2 per cent are directly dependent on agriculture for their livelihood and the remainder 2,778 or 27.8 per cent are supported by non-agricultural pursuits. Among the general population, Livelihood Class I constitutes 50 per cent, Class II 10.2 per cent, Class III 10.7 per cent, and Class IV 0.9 per cent.

Out of the total rural population of 65,12,923, about 86 per cent is agricultural and 14 per cent non-agricultural. The total agricultural population of the State is 57,44,406. Of this, 56,11,370 live in rural areas and the remaining in towns. The following table[1] gives for each district of the State the percentage proportion of rural population belonging to the agricultural classes :

TABLE 125

District	Percentage of rural population dependent on agriculture	District	Percentage of rural population dependent on agriculture
Bhind ..	.. 91.6	Ujjain ..	.. 86.6
Gird ..	.. 34.8	Indore ..	.. 77.6
Morena ..	.. 89.8	Dewas ..	.. 88.0
Shivpuri ..	.. 83.3	Mandsaur	.. 83.7
Goona ..	.. 84.6	Ratlam ..	.. 88.0
Bhilsa ..	.. 83.5	Dhar ..	.. 86.6
Rajgarh ..	.. 86.0	Jhabua ..	.. 90.2
Shajapur ..	.. 81.2	Nimar ..	.. 89.3

According to the 1951 Census Report, among the agricultural classes, 69.8 per cent are cultivating owners (Class I), 14.1 per cent are tenants (Class II), 14.8 per cent are agricultural labourers (Class III) and 13 per cent are rent-receivers (Class IV). These figures differ very widely from those supplied by the General Village Survey of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry. The occupation and status of 2,512 families surveyed in the 24 selected villages would be found in Table 126[2] (p. 541).

The writer of the Madhya Bharat Census Report has made an attempt to compare the two results. He, however, makes the initial mistake of comparing the proportion of different livelihood cate-

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[1] Census of India, 1951, Vol. XV, Madhya Bharat and Bhopal Part I-A, Report by Rang Lal, Gwalior, 1954, p. 37.

[2] Agricultural Wages in India, Vol. I, Op. cit., p. 219.

TABLE 126

Occupation	No. of families		Percentage of total number of families	
Agricultural owners		1,043		41.5
Agricultural tenants		609		24.2
Agricultural workers :				
(a) Without land	256	411	10.2	16.4
(b) With land	155		6.2	
Total Agricultural Families		2,063		82.1
Total Non-agricultural Families		449		17.9
All Families		2,512		100.0

gories expressed as percentages of the agricultural classes in the Census Report with the livelihood categories expressed as percentages of the total rural population of the General Village Survey. He, nevertheless, concedes that, "In general it may be said that the figures (of the Census Report—*author*) slightly over-represent the number dependent on agriculture and on Livelihood Class I (the owner-cultivator class) and under-represent the landless labour and the rent-receiver livelihood classes." [1]

The General Family Survey of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry also surveyed 24 villages comprising 2,399 families with a total population of 12,559. This Survey gives the following occupational distribution of families : [2]

TABLE 127

	Agricultural land-ownership	Agricultural Tenancy	Agricultural Labour			Total agricultural families	All families
			With land	Without land	Total		
All (a)	953	571	179	298	477	2,001	2,399
Sample (b)	5,274	3,342	905	1,299	2,044	10,820	12,559
Villages (c)	5.4	5.86	5.06	4.36	4.62	5.42	5.23

(a) Number of families.
(b) Number of persons.
(c) Average number of persons per family.

It is found that 83.5 per cent of the families were agricultural, landowners accounting for 39.7 per cent, tenants for 23.8 per cent, and agricultural workers for about 20 per cent.

Caste Composition

Now a look at the caste composition of the population surveyed. 39 per cent of the agricultural landowners were Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas. At the same time, 46.4 per cent of the landowners belonged either to the families of scheduled castes, tribal and aboriginal communities or to other backward classes; the percentage of tenant families belonging to these castes was 45.5. Of the agricultural workers' families, 81.6 per cent belonged to scheduled castes and tribes and aboriginal communities or other backward classes. Only a few families of Kshatriyas and Vaishyas had agricultural labour as their family occupation.

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[1] Census of India, 1951, Vol. XV, Madhya Bharat and Bhopal, Part I-A, Report; p. 36.

[2] Rural Man-Power and Occupational Structure, Op. cit., from table on p. 227.

The Intensive Family Survey of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry also found that "as many as 82 per cent of the agricultural labourers were drawn from scheduled castes and tribes and aboriginal communities and other backward classes"[1]. These labourers are the poorest of the poor, the annual income of a casual wage earner being Rs. 407 and of the attached labourer Rs. 364 annually, which works out to about Rs. 34 and Rs. 30 per month, respectively.[2]

Size Distribution Of Landholdings

The Census of Landholdings and Cultivation conducted by the Land Reforms Division of the Planning Commission gives the following account of holdings classified according to area owned :

TABLE 128

Grade of Holdings	No. of holdings (in thousand)	Area (in thousand acres)
upto 1 Acre	179.6	80.6
1.0 to 2.5	204.1	352.9
2.5 to 5.0	267.6	980.8
5.0 to 7.5	187.0	1,147.8
7.5 to 10.0	135.9	1,177.5
10.0 to 12.5	97.7	1,091.3
12.5 to 15.5	75.3	1,032.6
15.0 to 17.5	55.1	891.7
17.5 to 20.0	42.7	798.7
20.0 to 25.0	53.4	1,302.9
25.0 to 30.0	37.1	1,010.5
30.0 to 35.0	23.8	770.1
35.0 to 40.0	15.9	593.8
40.0 to 45.0	11.0	466.6
45.0 to 50.0	7.9	375.7
50 acres and above	29.44	2,570.1
STATE TOTAL	1,428.7	14,643.0

It follows that 383.7 thousand holdings, or about 27 per cent of the total are less than 2.5 acres and cover only 433.5 thousand acres, or a bare 3 per cent of the total area of holdings. On the other hand, 29.44 thousand holdings of 50 acres and above, a bare 2 per cent of the total number, cover 2,570.1 thousand acres, or nearly 17 per cent of the total area of holdings. The crying maladjustment of land distribution is obvious.

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[1] Agricultural Labour Enquiry : **Report on Intensive Survey of Agricultural Labour, Vol. VI, Central India**, Govt. of India, Ministry of Labour, Delhi, 1955; p. 54.

[2] Ibid, See Statement on pp. 70-71.

First Panchayat Elections

First elections to Madhya Bharat Panchayats on the basis of adult franchise were held as early as January 26, 1951. In a message sent on the occasion, Prime Minister Shri Nehru said[1]: "I understand that the first Gram Panchayat elections on the basis of adult franchise are taking place in Madhya Bharat soon. They will start on January 26. This day is a special day for India when we devote ourselves anew to the service of our motherland. Elections on this day should, therefore, have a special significance. I earnestly hope that the men and women of Madhya Bharat will exercise their franchise in a manner worthy of our country."

Some Panchayat legislations were in force in certain of the merged princely states before their integration in Madhya Bharat. A total of 1,099 Panchayats were in existence in these areas at the time of the merger. Soon after the inauguration of Madhya Bharat, a Panchayat Act was passed in 1949. Rules under the Act, and preparations for the elections were completed in 1950. Elections were first held in Indore on January 26, 1951. In the light of the experience gained, certain amendments were made in the Act and Rules. By January 1952, elections to Gram Panchayats in all the districts were completed. Elections to Nyaya, Kendra and Mandal Panchayats were also simultaneously begun and completed by 21.7. 1952, from which date systematic Panchayat functioning in terms of the State Panchayat legislation commenced all over Madhya Bharat. It was a great experiment in direct democracy in the rural areas, unprecedented in the annals of the State. As a result of the elections, 4,110 Gram Panchayats, 223 Kendra and an equal number of Nyaya Panchayats and 16 Mandal Panchayats came into being and the entire rural population of the State began to enjoy the benefits of local self-rule. The elections to Gram Panchayats were singularly free from rancour and conflict. Out of a total of 30,090 Panches, the vast majority were returned unopposed, elections being necessitated for only 8,998 Panches. Out of a total number of 12,11,259 voters, 3,29,769 exercised their right in the election of 8,998 Panches. A notable feature of the elections was the interest taken by village women, many of whom were elected as Panches.

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[1] Hindusthan Standard, 27.1.'51.

Three Gradations Of Panchayats In Madhaya Bharat

We have referred above to Gram, Kendra, and Mandal Panchayats. This gradation is a special feature of the Panchayat legislation of the State. The Gram Panchayat is formed in every *patwari halka,* which generally has a population of 1,000 or a little more. Smaller villages are grouped together to reach this total for the purpose of constituting a Gram Panchayat. A Kendra Panchayat is formed for every Revenue Inspector's Circle which generally has a population of from 25,000-40,000. The Mandal Panchayat is for the district.

The Gram Panchayats are elected on the basis of adult franchise by show of hands. The Panches of the Gram Panchayats elect the Kendra Panchayat by secret ballot. All the Sarpanches of Kendra Panchayats constitute the Mandal Panchayat and elect from among themselves a Sarpanch and an Up-Sarpanch.

The general principle followed in Gram Panchayat elections is to elect one Panch for every 200 of the population. A Panchayat has a minimum membership of 5 and a maximum of 15. In case the population of a Panchayat area has 45 per cent Harijans or Adivasis, their seat in the Panchayat is reserved. Every Gram Panchayat elects a Sarpanch and an Up-Sarpanch from among its members. A Kendra Panchayat has to have a minimum membership of 11, and the maximum membership is not to exceed twice the total number of Panchayats within its jurisdiction. The members of the Kendra Panchayat elect from among themselves a Sarpanch and an Up-Sarpanch.

Obligatory And Discretionary Functions Of Panchayats

The State legislation has also graded the obligatory and discretionary functions of the three types of Panchayats.

The obligatory functions of a Gram Panchayat are : sanitation, construction, repair and maintenance of wells, tanks, lanes, roads, and water channels; provision for drinking water supply; destruction of wild animals and mad dogs; and prevention of epidemics. The discretionary functions include provision and management of *dharmshalas*, recreation places and clubs, *akharas,* libraries; defence; planting of trees; construction and maintenance of public latrines; street lighting; control over slaughter houses; compost pits; and other activities for popular welfare.

The obligatory functions of a Kendra Panchayat are : arrangements for adult education; development of agriculture, cottage industries and trade; management of cattle pounds and improvement of cattle breed; maintenance of a register of births, deaths and marriages, and animal census; construction of new buildings and repair of old ones; organisation of watch and ward service for its area; agricultural improvement; assistance to Gram Panchayats, helping them in their difficulties and in village development. The discretionary functions include: distribution and popularisation of better seeds; disposal of dead animals; control over harmful occupations; assistance to Panchayats in getting loan from the Government; helping sick and diseased people and other activities for community welfare.

The obligatory functions of the Mandal Panchayat are: management of First Aid Centres, hospitals, cattle pounds, *hats* and *melas*, ferries and boats; construction and maintenance of *dharamshalas*, *sarais*, roads and buildings; development of agriculture and animal husbandry; organisation of exhibitions; development of trade and commerce and industry; vaccination against diseases; medical aid and prevention of epidemics; collection of vital statistics; relief work in times of natural calamities, famines, etc.; supervision, inspection, assistance and encouragement of Kendra Panchayats; undertaking development work in co-operation with other Mandal Panchayats. The discretionary functions include: building homes for orphans, aged and crippled people; establishment of maternity and child welfare centres; segregation of persons suffering from contagious diseases, and other activities for rural welfare.

The term of Gram, Kendra and Mandal Panchayats is for three years.

Nyaya Panchayats

There is one Nyaya Panchayat for every Kendra Panchayat. Generally speaking, the area of a Nyaya Panchayat is similar to Revenue Inspector's Circle. At present, every Nyaya Panchayat has under its jurisdiction 18 villages. The Government can, however, establish Nyaya Panchayats in villages exceeding a population of 2,000. The term of a Nyaya Panchayat is one year. The Panches of Gram Panchayats lying within the jurisdiction of the Nyaya Panchayat meet to elect first a Sarpanch of the Nyaya Panchayat. The Nyaya Panchayat has no Up-Sarpanch. The members of a Nyaya Panchayat vary from 5 to 11, who are also elected by the Panches of the Gram Panchayats. Elections are held by secret ballot. Places not filled by election are filled by nomination. No member of a Nyaya Panchayat can stand as a candidate for the Kendra Panchayat. This provision adequately separates the executive functions of the Panchayats from the judicial.

The Nyaya Panchayats have jurisdiction over civil suits upto a value of Rs. 100, and also criminal powers more or less as in other

States, e.g., Rajasthan. In certain special cases, the Government can authorise a Nyaya Panchayat to try a suit up to the value of Rs. 500. An amendment of the Act empowers the Government to confer a well-functioning Gram Panchayat with a good record to exercise judicial powers. Nyaya Panchayats can impose fines but cannot award punishment. No lawyers are allowed to appear. There is no appeal against a decision of the Nyaya Panchayat, but the District Magistrate or the District Judge have powers of revision.

We have not come across any report about the working of Nyaya Panchayats in Madhya Bharat. Their work, on the whole, has been regarded as satisfactory. There have been hardly cases where Nyaya Panchayats were influenced by factionalism. Reports submitted to the Government by District Judges and other judicial officers show that the Panches of the Nyaya Panchayats suffer from an ignorance of laws they are required to administer. In one instance, in Dhar, an under-trial had to remain in lock-up for about three months for an alleged minor offence, as the Nyaya Panchayat kept on postponing the date of trial. Such instances, however, are very rare. It is apparent that an intensive training of Nyaya Panches is necessary.

In the light of experience gained, the Government has been giving thought to certain proposals for effective improvements in Nyaya Panchayats. It is felt that a Revenue Inspector's Circle is rather too big for Nyaya Panchayat. A paid secretary of a Nyaya Panchayat cannot function effectively in an area of more than 3 to 4 villages. Thus far, only ten villages with a population of 2,000 and above have been allowed to have Nyaya Panchayats. A proposal for reducing even this population limit is under consideration, since enthusiastic people are to be found in smaller areas. It is also proposed to extend the term of Nyaya Panchayats to three years.

Revenue And Expenditure

The Gram Panchayats can levy certain compulsory taxes. There are some other taxes which they can levy under their discretion. The compulsory ones are: (i) a land tax at the rate of half anna per rupee; (ii) a house tax on all houses in the village *abadi*. In case, however, the land tax paid by a person is equal to or less than the assessment on the house, he is not required to pay house-tax. In case the assessment on a house exceeds the land tax paid by an individual, he is required to pay the difference. The income from land and house tax is divided equally between the Gram, Kendra and Mandal Panchayats.

The third compulsory tax is in the form of *Shramadan* by all able-bodied persons in the Gram Panchayat area between the ages of 20 and 50 for 5 days in a year. In case a person does not or cannot so work, he is required to pay twice the amount assessed as value for five days' *Shramadan*.

Besides the above, the Panchayats can levy the following taxes under their discretion :

(1) A tax on vehicles and draught animals;

(2) Fees on persons selling their wares at places or buildings within the jurisdiction of the Panchayats;

(3) A fee for recording the entry of animals sold within the Panchayat jurisdiction;

(4) A fee on use of *sarais, dharmshalas,* rest-houses, slaughter houses, camping places, etc.;

(5) A water tax;

(6) A fee from persons in the village who maintain private latrines in their homes, provided the Panchayat arranges for their regular cleansing;

(7) A lighting tax;

(8) A fee for maintenance and clearing of village drains;

(9) A fee from agents, commission agents, people carrying on the business of weighments, etc.;

(10) A tax on entertainment upon cinemas, dramas, circus, and other displays in the Panchayat area;

(11) Any other tax with the sanction of the Government.

All the three grades of Panchayats can levy these taxes. In case such tax or taxes are levied by a Gram Panchayat, the entire income will accrue to it. In case a Kendra Panchayat imposes these taxes, the income will be divided half and half between it and the Gram Panchayats under it. In case a Mandal Panchayat imposes these taxes, the income will be divided equally between the Gram, Kendra and Mandal Panchayats. It is further directed that there will be no duplication in the imposition of these taxes. In other words, if a Mandal Panchayat imposes a tax, the same cannot be levied by Kendra and Gram Panchayats. Similarly, a tax levied by a Kendra Panchayat cannot be imposed by a Gram Panchayat under its jurisdiction. Also, if a certain tax is imposed by a Kendra Panchayat after the same has been levied by a Gram Panchayat, the Gram Panchayat taxation will automatically lapse. So also when the Mandal Panchayat decides to levy a tax already imposed by a Kendra Panchayat, the Kendra taxation will lapse.

The income is spent by different categories of Panchayats in accordance with the funds provided in their respective budgets for different obligatory and discretionary functions already indicated. The Gram Panchayats can sanction an amount up to Rs. 200 for any construction work, the Kendra Panchayats up to Rs. 500, and the Mandal Panchayats up to Rs. 1,000. For expenses beyond this amount, the sanction of higher authorities has to be obtained.

Besides the above sources of income, the Panchayats receive grants from the Government. Thus, a sum of Rs. 4,00,000 was advanced to the Panchayats in the year of their inauguration, that is, 1951. It would appear that the State gives an amount to the Panchayat equal to the amount collected by them as land tax by way of aid. In 1952, Rs. 9,12,000 was thus advanced. Besides this, the Government supplies medicine chests to Panchayats. Panchayat members are given elementary training for proper distribution of medicines. Grant-in-aid is also given for installing radio sets. Thus, Rs. 8,000 was advanced in 1951 and Rs. 22,000 in 1952 for the purpose. Grants-in-aid are also given for construction of Panchayat Bhavans, libraries, fair-weather roads, etc.

Panchayat Staff: Control And Supervision

The Gram Panchayats keep a part-time or full-time secretary, according to the finances available. Every Kendra Panchayat has a full-time secretary. The Mandal Panchayats have a secretary, who is its Administrative Officer. The rules under the Act define the code of discipline under which these employees in various grades of Panchayats have to work. The Mandal Panchayats can keep an overseer, an additional secretary and one or two clerks, besides the Administrative Officer. The Kendra Panchayats can also employ an additional hand to help the full-time secretary in his work. The Panchayats can directly make appointments carrying a salary up to Rs. 40. For appointments of a higher salary, the sanction of the authorities of the Panchayat Department has to be obtained.

The State Government exercises supervision over the Panchayats through its Department of Panchayats and Co-operatives. There is a District Development Officer in each district, responsible for supervision of Panchayats. He is assisted by Tehsil Development Inspectors. The Government has the power to supersede defaulting Panchayats.

Madhya Bharat Pradesh Congress On Panchayats

The functioning of Panchayats in Madhya Bharat has been a singular success. Right from their inauguration, the Panchayats brought forth the best among the village people and amazing results were attained. Thus, for example, in village Chimak in Mandal Gird of Gwalior Division, one Jagna Modi gave a Panchayat Bhavan worth Rs. 8,000 as gift to the Panchayat. In another village, Devra, the Sarpanch, Meharban Singh, gave a cash donation of Rs. 1,000. Road construction, tank and well construction and repair, planting of trees, opening of libraries, and similar other activities were taken up in right earnest. In January 1954, a meeting of the Madhya Bharat Pradesh Congress Committee reviewed the working of the Panchayat institution in the State in the course of the last two years and adopted a comprehensive resolution as follows :

"Panchayats in Madhya Bharat have undertaken the work of village reconstruction during the last two years. In spite of the difficulties arising out of lack of experience, defects of rules, and other reasons, the success achieved by the Panchayats is enough to convince that they can regenerate our country. Panchayats have many-sided functions. Keeping in view these many-sided responsibilities and the consequent requirements, the rights which they enjoy under the Act, and the resources available to them, are far from adequate. The financial aid and other facilities given to the Panchayats by the Government are less compared to some other States. In spite of all this, the Conference is of the opinion that the performance of the Panchayats is highly commendable. There is no limit to our progressive march forward, and it is essential that we take certain definite practical steps for our future programme, which of necessity will have to be in line with the Five-Year Plan. First of all, it is necessary to amend and expand our Panchayat Act. Amendment of the Act by itself will not lead to the achievement of our objectives, but this will certainly initiate those psychological changes which today are essential in the attitudes of the administration and the people. Today the people look to the Government for everything. And the Government's attitude, as expressed by the day-to-day behaviour of the officials, is not merely outdated but is highly sceptical about the capacities of the Panchayats. The great Five-Year Plan for India's development specifically directs that under the District Development Councils, the local institutions should have the fullest part in all development programmes. The Constitution also gives a definite place to the village bodies. The Government must, therefore, seek the fullest popular co-operation and should help the local bodies in the fulfilment of their programmes as much as it cares for the fulfilment of its own programmes. The local bodies, on their part, must extend the fullest co-operation to all Government programmes. Only then will the Panchayats be able to work much more than what they are doing today, and the Conference believes that only then we will build the India of our golden dreams, strong, powerful and democratic.

"The Conference, therefore, recommends that the Government, should introduce necessary amendments in the Panchayat Act in the light of the spirit indicated above, and open the way for the Panchayats to play their glorious role, and fulfil all the expectations which have been already aroused by the work done by them thus far.

"The Conference feels that the spirit of service rather than the consciousness of rights can alone be the basis for all Panchayat work. Freedom from factions and a feeling of authority alone give permanent results to Panchayat activities. The Conference appeals to all people, and to Congressmen particularly, to establish close contacts with the Panchayats, establish harmony between Government and Panchayat activities, so that we soon achieve happiness, peace and prosperity in our villages."

Proposals For Amendment Of Panchayat Act

This call of the Pradesh Congress Committee for a spirit of rededication to the Panchayat cause, and for amendments to the Panchayat Act, found echoes all over the State. The Government soon gave thought to the question of amendment of the Act. The suggestion of the Madhya Bharat Congress to introduce the system of secret ballot replacing the existing practice of elections by show of hands found favour with the Government. The Panches and Sarpanches also met in conferences and placed their demands on the Government. According to a correspondent [1], the Sarpanches were reported to have suggested that the proportion of six pies per rupee Panchayat levy on land revenue fell much too short of the growing requirements. It should, therefore, be not only increased but some fraction of the State's share of excise income and forest receipts should be contributed to Panchayat funds. Grazing lands should be placed under the control of Village Panchayats. Legal difficulties experienced in the full utilization of the agency of *chowkidari* in Panchayat work were sought to be removed by clearly defining their position. Though Kendra Panchayats were authorised to manage cattle pounds, there were other laws, it was pointed out, which stood in way of their effectively controlling them.

It was also at times experienced that once the amount of Panchayat levy realised was deposited in the State treasury, there were difficulties in withdrawing the same in time. Similarly, there were stated to be cases in which the prescribed share of Government contribution was available only in the form of small advances. Vetoing of their budget proposals by the relevant authority also created delays and difficulties in pushing ahead their schemes. It was suggested that a system of mutual consultation, before making radical change in the budget estimates, should be evolved to avoid misunderstanding. Another experience which was stated was that the village committees appointed for the supervision of local work acted as rival bodies. The Government was advised to withdraw them from the field gradually. For closer co-ordination with development activity, it was suggested that the development authorities and Panchayats should work together instead of operating separately. One way suggested for achieving this was to appoint village-level workers as Panchayat secretaries and Block Officers in like position at circle level.

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[1] **Hindustan Times, 3.7.'54.**

A correspondent of the same paper reported in February 1955[1] of far-reaching changes that were sought to be introduced in the Panchayat Act in regard to Nyaya Panchayats. The main directions in which additional amendments to the Act were proposed, according to the correspondent, related to the extent of "criminal" jurisdiction of the Nyaya Panchayats, penalties for failing to appear before them, issue of warrants, execution of decrees and recovery of fine. The following were some of the important amendments according to the report :

If a Nyaya Panchayat is satisfied that a person is evading the service of summons, it may issue a bailable warrant against him for a sum not exceeding Rs. 25.

It may also entertain or try specified suits or cases under any law. It could try cases of theft and misappropriation as well as cattle trespass or any other specified offences. It may also transfer cases regarding the execution of an order of decree to the civil judge's court if there is no Nyaya Panchayat within its jurisdiction.

Every case within the jurisdiction of a Nyaya Panchayat shall be instituted before it within the jurisdiction of which the offence is committed, and also within the jurisdiction of which defendant ordinarily resides or carries on business at the time of the institution of the suit, irrespective of the place where the cause of action arose.

Need To Improve Panchayat Finances

In July 1955, a deputation of Sarpanches of Mandal Panchayats waited upon the Chief Minister, Shri Takhtamal Jain, and submitted a memorandum. The memorandum said that the financial provisions made by the State Government in the form of grants-in-aid and technical aid for various works undertaken by the Panchayats were inadequate. The Sarpanches said that the land revenue due to Panchayats, which had been collected by the State Government, had not been given to several Panchayats for the past three years. The Government had also not fully paid its contribution of the land revenue to the Panchayats. It was esti-

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[1] **Hindustan Times, 13.2.'55.**

TABULAR REPRESENTATION X

No. of villages and Panchayats, etc.	Legislation passed	Amendment	Village Panchayats	
			How Constituted	Powers
Total No. of villages: 21,900. Village covered : Practically every village is within its range.	Madhya Bharat Panchayat Act, 1949.	First Amendment, 1950. Second Amendment, 1951. Third Amendment, 1953.	Three kinds of Panchayats: 1. One for every 1,000 or more population villages. 2. Central Panchayat for the Revenue Inspector's Circle. 3. Divisional Panchayat for District. Elected on adult franchise.	Levying of taxes, maintenance of roads hospitals, etc. A fee can be levied on all issues put before the Panchayat. The rate to be decided by Govt. Fines for breaking rules framed by the Panchayats—upto Rs. 10 can be imposed. **Obligatory functions:** Lighting of streets, etc. Functions are divided for the respective zonal Panchayats. Mukhiya elected by Panches. Common Dept. for Panchayat and co-operation. Repairs and maintenance of roads, sanitation, public health are compulsory functions.

PANCHAYAT INSTITUTION IN MADHYA BHARAT

Sources of Revenue of Panchayats	Nyaya Panchayats		Report on the working of Panchayats	REMARKS
	How Constituted	Powers		
i) Taxes: Two categories: a) Essential b) Obligatory. ii) Govt. Grants. Land tax, house tax, labour tax, etc. Taxes on vehicles, trades and professions, water-rate, etc. and other taxes, which the Govt. sanctions for levy. Govt. assistance is equal to the amount collected through land tax.	There is one Nyaya Panchayat for every central Panchayat. No. of members varies between 5 and 11. Tenure one year. This is a separate body. Tenure is only one year.	To try civil cases which come under its jurisdiction, e.g., accounts of individuals, financial affairs, etc. Some sections of the I.P.C. can also be tried by the N.P.	The work is satisfactory. There is a proposal to amend the Act so that the Village Panchayat could establish a Sub-Committee which should work as the Village Development Committee.	Panchayat organisation is on zonal basis. Nyaya Panchayats have definite powers in trying cases. The question of choosing members of the Nyaya Panchayat from those of the Central Panchayat is being considered.

mated that thus about Rs. 16 lakhs due to Panchayats were "blocked under wrong heads by the Government."[1] The Government was asked to give liberal subsidies for the maintenance of school buildings, dispensaries, roads and wells constructed by the Panchayats, or, in the alternative, the P.W.D. should undertake the responsibility. The Sarpanches also pointed out that in the Adivasi areas, the revenue of the Panchayats was very poor, and the Government should give a share of the forest income to such Panchayats for development work.

As we write these lines, we find a newspaper report[2] that the Madhya Bharat Assembly passed an amending Bill to the Panchayat Act on April 11, 1956. The amending Bill directs compulsory representation of women in the Panchayats. It also replaces the open system of voting by secret ballot in conformity with popular demand. By another amendment, the compulsory levy of *Shramdan* was raised from five days to seven days in a year. We are not aware of other amendments that may have been made, specially in regard to the financial position of the Panchayats and the Nyaya Panchayats. It is obvious that though Panchayats in the State have made a very promising beginning, administrative inelasticity and inefficiency have hampered their progress. Energetic steps need to be taken to remove these difficulties. The Panches, the Sarpanches, and the Congressmen in Madhya Bharat are alert and active on the question, and it is the surest guarantee for certain future advance.

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[1] **Statesman**, 27.7.'55.

[2] **Hindustan Times Evening News**, 12.4.'56.

CHAPTER XXIV

HYDERABAD

FORMING a polygonal tract in the Indian Peninsula, Hyderabad State occupies almost the whole of the central part of the Deccan Plateau. The wide expanse of the State, with an area of 82,213 square miles, presents a variety of surface and features. Its population according to the 1951 Census was 1,86,52,964, the density of population being 227 per square mile. In order of population the State is seventh in the Indian Union. The State may be divided into two fairly distinct regions, the western generally called Marathwada, and the eastern called Telengana, although it has some *Kanarese*-speaking population as well.

Distribution Of Population In Villages

Out of the total population of 1,86,55,108 of the State, as many as 1,51,78,949 live in villages, that is, out of every 1,000 persons in the State, 814 reside in rural areas. The number of persons living in villages among every 1,000 of the total population varies from 236 in Hyderabad district to 922 in Nalgonda district. The rural population is spread over 19,909 populated villages, which gives an average population of 762 per village. This average population, however, varies considerably from district to district. The average population per village (including hamlets thereof) in the districts of Hyderabad would be found in the following table :[1]

TABLE 129

District	Population per village	District	Population per village
Warangal	1,276	Hyderabad	734
Karimnagar	1,242	Bhir	719
Nalgonda	1,144	Bidar	716
Mahbubnagar	869	Raichur	593
Nizamabad	849	Nanded	580
Medak	845	Parbhani	571
Osmanabad	824	Aurangabad	546
Gulbarga	769	Adilabad	440

Of the 19,909 inhabited villages of the State, 9,136 are very small (population less than 500), 9,502 are small villages (population 500—2,000), and only 1,252 are large villages (population 2,000—5,000). Only 19 villages of the State have a population of more than 5,000. Of the total rural population of 1,51,78,949, 24,51,050 or 161 out of every 1,000 live in very small villages; 91,46,278 or 603 out of every 1,000 live in small villages; 34,77,024, or 229 among every 1,000 live in large villages; and only 1,04,597 or 7 out of every 1,000 live in very large villages. Thus, almost 50 per cent of the State's total population is accounted for by small villages. The district-wise distribution of rural population among villages of different sizes, however, shows considerable divergence, though there is general uniformity in respect of the fact that more than half the rural population resides in small villages. The actual number of persons living in very small villages (population less than 500), among every 1,000 of the rural population, is as high as 323 in Adilabad (where, incidentally, the average population per village is lowest), and as low as 45 in Warangal (where the average population per village is the highest). The number of persons living in small villages (population 500—2,000), among every 1,000 of the total rural population, is highest in Karimnagar (392) and lowest in Adilabad (68). The number of very small, small and large villages, among every 1,000 of the inhabited villages, as recorded at each of the previous Censuses since 1901 is given in the following table :[1]

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[1] **Census of India, 1951, Vol. IX, Hyderabad, I-A Report,** by C. K. Murthy; **p. 183.**

TABLE 130

Distribution of every 1,000 populated villages according to their sizes

Year	Very Small	Small	Large	Year	Very Small	Small	Large
1901	664	310	26	1931	581	380	39
1911	580	384	36	1941	550	404	46
1921	629	341	30	1951	459	477	63

The population per village as well as the number per 1,000 of the rural population living in villages of different sizes as recorded at each of the previous Censuses since 1901 would be found in the following table :[2]

TABLE 131

Year	Population per Villages	Number per 1,000 of the Rural Population, living in			
		Very small villages	Small villages	Large villages	Very large villages
1901	500	307	550	142	..
1911	599	244	587	164	5
1921	532	261	589	146	..
1931	591	222	598	180	..
1941	633	208	586	206	..
1951	762	161	603	229	7

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[1] Ibid, p. 200.
[2] Ibid, p. 203.

Livelihood Pattern Of The General Population

Out of the total State population of 1,86,55,108, as many as 1,27,14,824 or over 68 per cent were principally dependent on agricultural occupations, and only 59,40,284 or less than 32 per cent were dependent on non-agricultural occupations. Within the State itself, the proportion of persons principally sustained by agriculture is higher in the western, that is, the Marathi and Kannada districts of the State, than in the eastern, that is, the Telugu districts. The proportion of population belonging to the different livelihood classes for every 1,000 of the population of the State is as under : 412 persons are principally sustained by owner cultivation; only 74 are dependent on tenant cultivation; 172 are principally dependent on agricultural labour; and only 24 are non-cultivating owners of land and agricultural rent-receivers. The remaining 318 out of every 1,000 population belong to non-agricultural livelihood classes.

The Rural Population

While in the State as a whole 682 among every 1,000 of the population belong to agricultural classes, the corresponding proportion in its rural areas is as much as 798. Thus, nearly four-fifths of the total rural population of Hyderabad State is primarily agricultural (over 95 per cent of the agricultural classes in the State lives in rural areas). The proportion of agricultural classes is distinctly higher in the rural areas of the western districts than in the eastern districts. For every 1,000 of the rural population, it is as high as 895 in Raichur, and in the neighbourhood of 885 in Osmanabad and Gulbarga. It ranges between 850 and 875 in Bidar, Parbhani, Bhir, Aurangabad and Nanded, where it is lowest (849). In the eastern districts, the corresponding proportion is highest in Madek (809); ranges between 730 and 785 in Adilabad, Warangal, Nizamabad, Mahbubnagar and Nalgonda districts; and declines sharply to 620 in Hyderabad and 615 in Karimnagar.

Out of every 1,000 persons living in rural areas, 487 or slightly less than half, belong to Livelihood Class I, that is, owner cultivators; 85 belong to Livelihood Class II, that is, tenant cultivators; 200 or one-fifth of the total belong to Livelihood Class III, that is, agricultural labourers; and Livelihood Class IV, that is, rent receivers, account for just 26 out of every 1,000 of the State's rural population.

The Agricultural Labourers

The General Village Survey of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry surveyed 34 villages comprising 5,421 families. The occupational distribution of families given by the Survey would be found in the following table[1] :

TABLE 132

Occupation	Number of families		Percentage to total number of families	
Agricultural owners ..		2,265		41.9
Agricultural tenants ..		239		4.4
Agricultural workers :				
(i) Without land ..	1,127)	1,800	20.8)	33.1
(ii) With land ..	673)		12.3)	
TOTAL AGRICULTURAL FAMILIES ..		4,304		79.4
TOTAL NON-AGRICULTURAL FAMILIES		1,117		20.6
ALL FAMILIES ..		5,421		100.0

It would be seen that whereas the 1951 Census returns show the number of agricultural labourers as 20 per cent of the rural population, this Survey puts the figure of their families at 33.1 per cent. The General Family Survey of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry surveyed 5,141 families living in 33 villages. The population of these villages was 25,191. The following table[2] gives the occupational distribution of families :

TABLE 133

	Agricultural landownership	Agricultural tenancy	Agricultural Labour			Total agricultural families	Total Non-agricultural families	All Families
			With land	Without land	Total			
All (a)	1,795	216	994	1,168	2,162	4,173	962	5.141
Sample (b)	9,425	1,106	5,171	4,929	10,100	20,631	4,549	25,191
Villages (c)	(5.25)	(5.12)	(5.20)	(4.22)	(4.67)	(4.94)	(4.73)	(4.90)

(a) Total number of families
(b) Total number of persons in the families
(c) Average size of family

Of the total number of families, 4,173 or 81.2 per cent were agricultural, only 962 or 18.7 per cent being non-agricultural. The agricultural owners' families formed 34.9 per cent of the total, the tenant families numbered 216 or 4.2 per cent, and agricultural workers' families 2,612 or 42.1 per cent. Of the 2,162 agricultural workers' families, 752 or 34.8 per cent owned land. Only 199, or 9.2 per cent were lease holders.

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[1] Agricultural Wages in India, Vol. I, Op. cit., p. 195.

[2] Rural Man-Power and Occupational Structure, Op. cit., p. 197.

Caste Composition

No clear picture is available of the Caste composition of the surveyed families as the castes of 630 were unspecified, and 1,302 belonged to certain miscellaneous castes. Of the remaining 3,209, 53 were Brahmins, 35 of whom were landowners. There were only 15 Kshatriya families, of which 7 had agricultural labour as their family occupation. Of the 129 Vaishya families, only 33 were agricultural. Among the 1,741 families of backward classes, 737 or 42.3 per cent were landholders, 624 or 35.8 per cent agricultural workers, and 369 or 21.2 per cent non-agriculturists.

Size Distribution Of Holdings

We will now examine the size distribution of holdings. The Table 134 [1] (pp. 560-561) gives details of the number and area of holdings in different size groups for different categories of landholding families.

It follows that agricultural owners held 1,569, or 55.5 per cent of the total number of holdings, covering 74.9 per cent of the total area. Thus, land in the surveyed villages was mainly held by owner operators. Of the total number of holdings, 11.4 per cent were below 1 acre. 22.8 per cent of the holdings were below 2.5 acres. Holdings below 5 acres constituted 36 per cent of the total number of holdings. The Intensive Family Survey also arrived at similar conclusions.

A recent Hyderabad Government publication speaks of the wide disparities in land distribution in the State. "At the top there are only 1 per cent of the landholders who own 11.4 per cent of the total owned area. At the other end are 59 per cent of the landholders who own less than a basic holding and who together own less than 18 per cent of the total owned area. While the average size of ownership holdings is 17.2 acres, the average size of the substantial holdings is about 415 acres." [2]

The Panchayat Legislations: The *A'in* Of 1940

The Hyderabad Village Panchayats *A'in* of 1940 was the first enactment in the State for village self-government. 442 Panchayats were established under this *A'in*. These Panchayats under the then undemocratic set-up did no satisfactory work whatsoever, and for all practical purposes existed merely on paper. They were nominated bodies and had no representative character. The resources provided to these bodies were extremely meagre.

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[1] **Rural Man-Power and Occupational Structure**, Op. cit., p. 205.

[2] **Redistribution of Land in Hyderabad**, Land Reform Series-12. Issued by the Board of Revenue (Land Reforms), Hyderabad-Dn., 1956; p. 1.

TABLE

	HOLDER'S FAMILY			
Size of Holdings	Agricultural ownership		Agricultural tenancy	
	No.	Area (Acres)	No.	Area (Acres)
Under 1 acre	47	24.74	6	4.23
1 acre and under 2.5 acres ..	91	148.43	11	17.01
2.5 acres and under 5 acres ..	158	590.60	25	94.16
5 acres and under 7.5 acres ..	199	1,271.24	24	141.93
7.5 acres and under 10 acres ..	144	1,239.01	19	158.71
10 acres and under 25 acres ..	564	8,970.46	69	1,110.66
25 acres and under 50 acres ..	256	8,684.59	27	921.60
50 acres and under 100 acres ..	92	6,149.61	9	654.98
100 acres and above ..	18	2,742.97	1	119.18
Total ..	1,569	29,821.65	191	3,222.46
Average size of holding ..		19.01		16.88

Note : Figures within brackets are percentages.

The Panchayat Act Of 1951: Its Drawbacks

When the popular Ministry came into power, it repealed the *A'in* of 1940 and enacted the Hyderabad Village Panchayats Act, 1951. Under this Act, elections to Village Panchayats were held for the first time on the basis of adult franchise. The Government, however, retained the right to nominate some members including those of the scheduled castes. A village having a population of over 1,000 but below 5,000 was considered normally as suitable for the establishment of a Village Panchayat. There was, however, a provision to group together certain villages for the purpose. There was a provision in the Act for the delegation of Gram Panchayat powers to Rural Reconstruction or Co-operative Societies, though in actual practice a very few Rural Reconstruction Societies were so empowered. The functions of Village Panchayats were limited and were divided into obligatory and discretionary. The resources were insufficient to meet even the limited powers conferred on the Village Panchayats. The Act provided for a Government grant of 15 per cent of the land revenue of the village and also 1|3rd of the local cess as a contribution from the District Board. The Act also authorised the Panchayats to levy certain taxes and collect fees. In actual practice, however, the Government failed to carry out the legal obligation of paying 15 per cent of the land revenue. In many cases this contribution did not exceed 7 per cent. The Act had provided for the constitution of Nyaya Panchayats, but in

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OCCUPATION

Agricultural Labour		Non-Agricultural		Total	TOTAL
No.	Area (Acres)	No.	Area (Acres)	No. of holdings	Area (Acres)
205	84.27	65	31.02	323 (11.4)	144.26 (.4)
168	272.66	51	82.25	321 (11.4)	520.35 (1.3)
162	586.76	29	109.19	374 (13.2)	1,380.71 (3.5)
71	426.86	28	165.81	322 (11.4)	2,005.84 (5.0)
66	564.03	14	115.52	243 (8.6)	2,007.27 (5.2)
129	1,994.31	29	466.40	791 (28.0)	12,541.83 (31.5)
35	1,178.36	9	326.79	327 (11.6)	11,111.35 (27.9)
6	379.53	..	..	107 (3.8)	7,184.12 (18.0)
..	..	..	..	19 (.6)	2,862.15 (7.2)
842	5,486.78	225	1,296.98	2,827 (100.0)	39,827.87 (100.0)
	6.52		5.76		14.09

actual practice none was constituted. In the very first year, 1,224 Village Panchayats were constituted under the Act, but the process was stopped in the following year because of lack of finances. Certain Panchayats showed remarkable results, but for the greater part Panchayat functioning remained unsatisfactory. After a lapse of two years, the State Government undertook the constitution of Panchayats in 1955. In that year another 1,500 Panchayats were constituted, bringing the total number of Panchayats to 2,724.

After the Local Self-Government Ministers Conference at Simla in 1954, the State Government reconsidered the entire question. It was obvious that the existing enactment was defective and insufficient to fulfil the purpose. Shri Gopal Rao Ekbote, the State Minister for Local Self-Government, has summarised the main features of this system as follows[1]:

(i) It was not properly elective or representative.
(ii) It was administrational, and not self-governing.
(iii) It was concerned with too narrow a range of the activities of the community.
(iv) The boundaries were not drawn in accordance with social requirements but arbitrarily, on purely geographical grounds.

The New Gram Panchayats Act: Constitution Of Panchayats

The State Government, therefore, enacted a new law, the

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[1] A.I.C.C. Economic Review, Vol. VIII, No. 3, Whole No. 148, dated June 1, 1956; See article entitled "Towards Rural Democracy in Hyderabad."

Hyderabad Gram Panchayats Act. The Act considerably widens the powers and functions of the Gram Panchayats and adds to their resources. It is a comprehensive Act. Its main features are described below.

Panchayats are constituted in villages with a population of not less than 1,000 and not more than 5,000. The Government can group a number of villages for the purpose. In special cases, however, Panchayats can be constituted in villages with less than 1,000 population or with more than 5,000 population. All adult persons of a village, whose names are included in the list of voters, constitute the Gram Sabha. At least two meetings of the Gram Sabha must be held every year to consider the annual statement of accounts, a report on work done by the Panchayat in the preceding financial year, and a programme of work for the next year.

The Gram Sabha elects the Gram Panchayat. A Village is divided into constituencies for the purpose. The representation of each constituency on the Gram Panchayat is on the basis of one Panch for every 150 of the population, provided that the total number of Panches in the Gram Panchayat shall in no case be more than 12 or less than 6. Seats are reserved in the Gram Panchayat for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes on the basis of their population. The Panches, so elected, then elect a Sarpanch and an Up-Sarpanch from amongst themselves in their first meeting. The term of office of the Panches is for three years, commencing from the date of the first meeting of the Gram Panchayat. The Government, however, has the power to extend the term of office by one year. The Gram Panchayat has the power to remove a Sarpanch by a 2|3rd majority and an Up-Sarpanch by a bare majority.

The Sarpanch presides over Gram Panchayat, as also Gram Sabha meetings and is responsible for the conduct of day-to-day administrative work of the Panchayat, subject to the supervision of the Gram Panchayat. The Gram Panchayat must meet at least once a month. The quorum is not less than one-half of the Gram Panchayat membership.

A Novel Feature

A novel feature of the Hyderabad Act is that two or more Gram Panchayats can enter into an agreement to provide common amenities to their villagers. Such contractual work is likely to prove beneficial for some major functions like water supply, electricity, library service, construction and maintenance of roads, etc., and is likely to effect economy and improve efficiency. Assessment and collection of taxes can also be the subject of agreement between different Panchayats.

There is a provision for the appointment of a *karbhari* who will be in charge of preparing and maintaining assessment list, essential statistics, accounts and records, and will be entitled to recover dues of the Gram Panchayat. He will be the main executive officer responsible for implementing all decisions of the Gram Panchayat. He is appointed by the Collector, but the Gram Panchayat has the power to remove him for misconduct or negligence of duties by two-third majority.

The duties, functions and powers assigned to the Gram Panchayat fall broadly into the following three classes :

I) Compulsory duties,
II) Discretionary functions,
III) Transferred functions.

These functions together cover very wide field of activities. The Gram Panchayats can perform these functions subject to their resources and local requirements. In addition to the functions specified under the Act, the State Government has the power to delegate such functions as it may deem fit.

The statutory functions of the Panchayats can be considered under the following heads :

i) Administrative,
ii) Civic,
iii) Social,
iv) Economic and Development,
v) Statistics,
vi) Judicial, and
vii) Police.

The Act provides for the vesting of the management of public property and other community buildings in the Panchayat. Gram Panchayats have been assigned the task of collection of land revenue, taxes and fees on behalf of the Government. This will enable the Government to gradually eliminate the system of *Vaiandari.* Land revenue collection is at present done by *patels* and *patwaris.* The Panchayats will also maintain the land records which at present are being maintained by village officials.

Civic functions include village sanitation, public health, water supply, transport and communications and building bye-laws. The Panchayats have the powers to lay down rules and standards for sanitation and can impose penalties for their non-observance. There is provision for street drains and general drainage arrangements. Panchayat can set up public lavatories and bathing places. Other civic functions of Panchayats are : filling up of disused wells, insanitary depressions, pools or pits; maintenance of public wells and tanks; preventing pollution of drinking water; maternity and child welfare; control of epidemics and contagious diseases; other medical facilities; control over slaughter houses; setting up of hospitals and dispensaries; construction and maintenance of village roads, streets, cart stands, market places, *dharmashalas*.

The social functions of Panchayats, relate to the following: education, recreation, social welfare, development of libraries and reading rooms, organisation of fairs and public festivals, *akharas,* removal of untouchability, discouraging gambling and drinking, prevention of child marriage, steps for the reduction of wasteful expenditure on marriages, funerals, etc.

The powers conferred on the Gram Panchayats under the Act touch various aspects of rural economy, e.g., agriculture, animal husbandry, subsidiary and cottage industries, marketing and co-operative movement, etc. Under agriculture are included supply of better seeds and manure, improvement of livestock, arrangement for co-operative and collective farming, control of pests and diseases, construction and supervision of minor irrigation works, establishment of granaries and grain banks, etc. The Panchayats can also arrange for the cultivation of common lands, lands under Government management, and lands which the owners are not able to cultivate. The object of the State Government is to make the Gram Panchayats the basis of the development of rural economy.

The Panchayats under the Act have been assigned the duty of collection and maintenance of vital statistics. They are required to help in population and livestock census and in the compilation of data on crops and agriculture.

The Judicial Aspect

According to Section 165 of the Act, every village shall elect five members to act as Nyaya Panches for a Nyaya Panchayat established for a village, and to form a panel of Nyaya Panches for Nyaya Panchayats established for a group of villages. A person elected to the Nyaya Panchayat has to be a permanent resident of the village, and should be able to read and write. Nyaya Panches cannot be members of the Gram Panchayat. The Nyaya Panches elect a Pradhan and an Up-Pradhan. The term of office of Nyaya Panches is for three years, but the Government can extend the term by one year. The Nyaya Panches are required to take oath of office. Panches guilty of misconduct and irregularities can be removed.

The Nyaya Panchayats have been vested with civil, criminal and revenue powers. They can try offences of a minor nature specified in Scheduled 'E' of the Act. In addition, they can try offences entrusted to them by the Government. They can order a person to furnish security for the maintenance of peace. They can refer some intricate cases to Munsiff Court.

Regarding civil suits, Section 190 of the Act provides that Nyaya Panchayats shall have the jurisdiction to hear a suit for money due on contracts except in respect of movable property or for the value thereof. They have further a jurisdiction to hear cases regarding damages to movable property and suits under the Cattle Trespass Act. The monetary jurisdiction of the Nyaya Panchayat has been fixed at Rs. 100. The Government, however, can raise the pecuniary jurisdiction of any Nyaya Panchayat to Rs. 500. The villagers are entitled under the Act to refer for award any of their disputes for whatever value to Nyaya Panchayats for arbitration. Some of the disputes under the Hyderabad Record of Rights and Regulations and the Hyderabad Tenancy and Agricultural Lands Acts can be tried by Nyaya Panchayats.

Conciliation Boards: Village Volunteer Force

A novel feature of the Hyderabad Act is the constitution of Conciliation Boards in the Gram Panchayats (Chapter X). Each party to the dispute can select one Panch from among those who are elected members of the Gram Panchayat, and the third person on the Board is the Sarpanch or the Up-Sarpanch. It has been specifically provided in the Act that no Nyaya Panchayat shall take cognizance of any dispute unless a certificate of failure of conciliation proceedings in respect thereof has been produced. It is expected that thus many disputes will be settled and there would be no need to go to Nyaya Panchayats.

The Act lays down detailed procedures for the conduct of Nyaya Panchayats. These are purposely kept very simple. Complaints, for example, can be made orally. No legal practitioner can appear before the Nyaya Panchayat. The parties, however, can be represented by agents. Fines imposed by Nyaya Panchayats, if not paid within the specified time, can be realised with the help of superior authorities. The Munsiff, Magistrate or the Deputy Collector has been authorised to revise any decision of the Nyaya Panchayat.

The Act authorises the Village Panchayats to constitute a Village Volunteer Force for watch and ward, and to assist the Gram and the Nyaya Panchayats in the discharge of their functions, the services of summons and notices. The Government can empower a Gram Panchayat to take measures for maintenance of law and order and prevention of crimes in the village. The Panchayat is authorised to appoint a *chaukidar*, also called a *kotwal* in the Act, and one or more of his assistants for this purpose. He is in charge of the watch and ward section of the Gram Panchayat, and has the right to arrest without a warrant any person who is proclaimed offender, or has been concerned in any cognizable offence, or is in possession of stolen property, or is a deserter from the army. The *kotwal* has also the obligation to inform the nearest police station of suspicious or sudden deaths or disputes which may lead to serious affray.

Sources Of Revenue

The Act provides for the constitution of a Panchayat Fund. The Gram Panchayat Fund consists of all the accumulated balances of the Gram Panchayat, all sums of taxes, tolls, fees, authorised to be levied under the Act, and all interests and profits arising from any Gram Panchayat investment or transaction, and also all fees and fines payable under the Act. Compensation received by the Gram Panchayat under the provisions of the Act, gifts or deposits of private individuals or institutions and loans raised by the Gram Panchayat are also treated as parts of the Panchayat Fund.

The other source of revenue of Panchayats is aids and grants from the Government and local boards. The Government has been made responsible under the Act to pay 15 per cent of the land revenue of the village as a grant. The District Local Board is also directed to pay 50 per cent of the local cess collected in the village under the District Board Act.

The obligatory taxes to be imposed by the Panchayats are: (i) property tax; (ii) tax on professions, trades and callings; (iii) vehicle tax; (iv) a tax on transfer of immovable property. The discretionary taxes are: (i) Pilgrim tax, (ii) general water tax, (iii) entertainment tax, (iv) animal tax, (v) toll tax.

Section 86 of the Act authorises the Gram Panchayat, after obtaining the sanction of the Gram Sabha, for a specific period and a specific purpose, a cess at the rate of two annas on every rupee of land revenue. The Gram Panchayats can borrow after obtaining the sanction of the Government.

The Act provides for the preparation of annual budgets by the Gram Panchayats and lays down the procedure for its approval. The District Boards have been authorised to approve the budgets. The accounts have to be submitted to the Gaon Sabha.

The Act empowers the Gram Panchayats to introduce compulsory manual labour for purposes of public utility. The approval of the Gaon Sabha has to be obtained. The Gaon Panchayat can specify the labour to be performed. A person is free to get labour assigned to him performed on his behalf by another person, or pay for its performance at such rates as may be determined by the Gram Panchayat. The Act prescribes penalty for non-performance of labour.

The District Boards have generally powers of supervision over the Gram Panchayats. The Collector, the President of the District Board, District Panchayat Officer, Deputy Collector, Tehsildar, or any other Officer authorised by the Government can inspect any property or work undertaken by the Panchayats. The Collector has the power to stop a Panchayat from undertaking any work considered undesirable or improper. The Government has the power to dissolve a Panchayat for repeated dereliction of duty, but the grounds of dissolution have to be communicated to the Gram Panchayat, which has to be given time to show cause against the proposal. In the period of dissolution, the District Board has the obligation to perform Panchayat functions in the village. Immediate steps have to be taken for the reconstruction of a Panchayat after its dissolution.

Conclusion

The preceding description of the Hyderabad Gram Panchayat Act reveals that the State Government has been very bold in conferring extensive rights on the Panchayats. Probably the Hyderabad Panchayats have been conferred more powers than Panchayats in any other State. Collection of land revenue, building up of co-operative farms, police functions, etc., now lie with the Panchayats. The experience of the working of Panchayats would, therefore, be rich and beneficial for future policy decisions. The Act has just been introduced and its working would be watched with interest. The State's Local Self-Government Minister, Shri Gopal Rao Ekbote, has said : "A vigilant eye to public good and a healthy spirit of co-operation are the most essential requisites for deriving the maximum benefit from the working of these Gram Panchayats." In Hyderabad, the Gram Panchayats have been assigned a vital role in the reconstruction of rural society.

CHAPTER XXV

MYSORE

SURROUNDED by Madras State in all directions except on the north and north-west, where it is bounded by districts Dharwar and North Canara of Bombay State, and towards the south by Coorg, Mysore State forms a triangle with the apex to the south, in the Nilgiris, where Eastern and Western Ghats meet. It has a ragged and uneven surface full of rocky hills and high mountains and ravines. According to the Mysore Census Report, "there is probably not a square mile of the whole surface that is absolutely flat or level and the slope ranges from 10 to 20 feet per mile in the more level portions and as high as 60 to 80 feet elsewhere."[1] The State has three major river systems, the Krishna, the Cauvery, the two Pennars and Polar, which all flow into the Bay of Bengal. The river systems support an extensive system of irrigation by means of channels drawn from immense dams, a large number of them coming down from ancient times, which retain the upper waters at a high level and permit only the overflow to pass down the stream.[2] Together they bring 1.15 million acres under wet cultivation, that is, nearly 18 per cent of the cropped area.

Distribution Of Population In Villages Of Different Sizes

The State had an area of 29,489 square miles at the 1951 Census with a population of 90,74,972 persons. The 1941 population was 73,29,140. Thus, in a decade the population increased by 23.7 per cent. Of the 1951 population, 68,96,245 or 76 per cent was rural and 21,78.727 or 24 per cent was urban. The density per square mile in 1951 was 308.1. The rural population lives in 16,439 villages. An idea of the distribution of rural population in the State and districts in villages of different sizes will be had from Table 135[3] (p. 569).

The Livelihood Pattern

It would thus be seen that more than 50 per cent of the rural population lives in villages with 500-2,000 population, while nearly

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[1] **Census of India 1951, vol. XIV, Mysore, Part I-Report,** by J. B. Mallaradhya, Bangalore, 1954; p. 3.

[2] This river system of irrigation combined with a system of tank (artificial reservoirs ranging from small ponds to big lakes locally known as *keres*) irrigation, supplemented by springheads called *Talapariges*, provide the State a unique type of hydrography hardly to be met anywhere else except in some neighbouring southern States of India. There are upwards of 30,000 tanks dispersed throughout the State formed by throwing *bunds* across the lower slopes of the valley.

[3] J. B. Mallaradhya, Op. cit., p. 222.

TABLE 135

State, City and District	Population per village	No. in villages per 1,000 of general population	No. per 1,000 rural population in villages with a population of 5,000 & over	2,000 to 5,000	500 to 2,000	Under 500
MYSORE STATE	423	760	11	91	520	378
Bangalore Corporation	..	..	..	..	..	..
Bangalore	490	900	54	94	521	331
Kolar Gold Field City	..	..	..	..	..	..
Kolar	312	876	..	49	376	575
Tumkur	437	908	..	77	537	386
Mysore City	..	..	..	..	..	..
Mysore	683	883	..	192	633	175
Mandya	481	892	17	87	564	332
Chitaldrug	604	843	8	128	626	238
Hassan	281	878	..	29	380	591
Chikmagalur	375	841	..	42	545	413
Shimoga	316	779	..	62	462	476

38 per cent lives in villages of less than 500 population. The distribution of the general population of the State in different livelihood classes in 1941 and 1951 would be found in the following table :[1]

TABLE 136

Livelihood Classes	Population		Percentage of 1951 population	Variation since 1941	
	1951	1941		Actual	Percentage
ALL CLASSES	90,74,972	73,29,140	100	17,45,832	+ 23.7
Agricultural Classes :	63,43,360	50,55,384	69.9	12,87,976	+ 25.5
Class I	50,32,787	42,98,607	55.4	7,34,180	+ 17.1
Class II	4,32,415	3,09,526	4.8	1,22,889	+ 39.7
Class III	6,15,853	3,91,951	6.8	2,23,902	+ 57.1
Class IV	2,62,305	55,300	2.9	2,07,005	+ 374.3
Non-Agricultural Classes	27,31,612	22,73,756	30.1	4,57,856	+ 20.1

It follows from the above table that the agricultural classes constitute 69.9 per cent of the total population of the State. Of the total population Livelihood Category I constitutes 55.4 per cent, and agricultural labourers are a bare 6.8 per cent.

The livelihood pattern of the rural population would be found in Table 137[2] (p. 570) which gives the number of persons per 10,000 of rural population belonging to different livelihood classes in the State and districts.

The Agricultural Labourers

The General Village Survey of the Ministry of Labour, however, returns a higher percentage of the families constituted by

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[1] Ibid, p. 115.

[2] Ibid, p. 224

TABLE 137

State and District	Per 10,000 of rural population belonging to Livelihood Class							
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
MYSORE STATE	7,072	570	835	299	444	166	18	596
Bangalore	6,553	504	747	222	674	245	44	1,011
Kolar	7,760	389	591	293	262	189	23	493
Tumkur	7,769	366	586	300	348	162	9	460
Mysore	7,091	606	1,002	342	343	148	8	460
Mandya	8,215	277	470	172	328	99	9	430
Chitaldrug	6,630	426	1,273	396	465	180	11	619
Hassan	8,021	265	666	273	337	70	6	362
Chikmagalur	5,511	912	1,437	292	1,028	148	24	648
Shimoga	4,832	2,077	1,281	464	415	176	22	733

agricultural workers. This Survey was conducted in two *Inam* and 22 Ryotwari villages. The occupation of families living in the sample villages is shown in the following table[1]:

TABLE 138

Occupation and status		Number of families		Percentage to total number of families
Agricultural owners		889		45.6
Agricultural tenants		114		5.8
Agricultural workers:				
(a) Without land	310	705	15.9	36.1
(b) With land	395		20.2	
TOTAL AGRICULTURAL FAMILIES		1,708		87.5
TOTAL NON-AGRICULTURAL FAMILIES		243		12.5
ALL FAMILIES		1,951		100.0

Here we find that as much as 36.1 per cent of the total number of families belong to Livelihood Category III.

The General Family Survey of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry, which surveyed 24 villages with a population of 9,893, found that as much as 42 per cent of the families were mainly agricultural workers. The Survey says[2]: "This figure appears to be high since 65.2 per cent of the agricultural workers' families held land, but since their holdings were so small, they had to depend upon labour to augment the family income."

Howsoever it be, the wide divergence in the figures returned by the Census Report and the Agricultural Labour Enquiry Surveys would be obvious from the foregoing. The poverty of the Mysore peasantry is indeed heart-rending. Says Mallaradhya[1]: "The average Mysorean is about as poor as the church mouse......His standard of living is extremely low, if not altogether appalling. An economic survey that was conducted a few years ago revealed that his average income was Rs. 65 per annum". Mallaradhya quotes a Special Officer, who conducted an indebtedness survey in Mysroe, as follows: [2]

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[1] Agricultural Wages in India, Op. cit., p. 231.

[2] Rural Man-Power and Occupational Structure, Op. cit., p. 242.

"The average and the poorer ryots forming nearly 85 per cent of the landowning families have not derived any extra income from land on account of high prices for agricultural products....The condition of the landless tenants and labourers has been much worse. The tenants' share of the produce has always been less than what is required for his subsistence on account of the small size of land he could secure for cultivation....during the last four years.... their (tenants' and labourers') position has grown worse and their debt has increased. It is only the few big landlords and businessmen who had opportunities for profiteering during the War, that have derived benefit on account of the rise in prices, and they form only a very poor percentage of the total population."

Caste Composition

The General Village Survey gives the following caste position of the population surveyed in the sample villages:[3] Of the 1940 families, 37 were Brahmins, 13 Vaishyas, 339 scheduled castes or tribes, 6 aboriginals, 152 backward classes and 1,403 belonging to other groups. Landowners were mostly Brahmins. 2|3rd of the families of Vaishyas were agricultural owners, 1|3rd agricultural workers. Most of the families belonging to scheduled castes, tribes and aboriginals and backward classes were agricultural and non-agricultural workers. Only 13.2% were landowners and tenants.

Size Distribution Of Holdings

The wide disparity between the percentage figures for agricultural labourers returned by the 1951 Census, and those given by the General Village and General Family Surveys of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry would no doubt strike the reader. Apart from this, of the comparatively large proportion of the agricultural population returned as owner-cultivators, the vast majority are cultivators of small holdings. We reproduce the following table[4] from the Mysore Census Report which gives the distribution of 10,000 agricultural holdings by size:

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[1] Mallaradhya, Op. cit., p. 44.

[2] Ibid, p. 46.

[3] Rural Man-Power and Occupational Structure, Op. cit., p. 242.

[4] J. B. Mallaradhya, Op. cit., p. 230.

TABLE

State, City and District	Distribution of 10,000 agricultural			
	Not exceeding 1 acre		Between 1-5 acres	
	No.	Extent	No.	Extent
MYSORE STATE	2,045	312	4,698	2,334
Bangalore Corporation	..	..	..	..
Bangalore	2,473	434	4,296	2,286
Kolar Gold Fields City	..	..	..	..
Kolar	2,839	601	4,743	3,451
Tumkur	1,391	137	4,762	2,055
Mysore City	..	..	..	..
Mysore	3,973	650	4,361	3,291
Mandya	2,779	739	5,646	3,441
Chitaldrug	788	137	2,987	999
Hassan	1,260	228	5,827	3,214
Chikmagalur	1,331	134	4,127	1,765
Shimoga	1,036	86	4,114	1,882

It follows that out of 10,000 holdings, 2,405, that is, nearly 20 per cent were of 1 acre and less and as many as 6,743 were of 5 acres and less. The General Family Survey of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry also arrived at almost similar conclusions. In the 24 villages surveyed, there were 1,228 holdings covering an area of 8,864.97 acres. The cumulative frequencies of holdings as given by the Survey would be found in the following table[1]:

TABLE 140

Size Groups	Cumulative frequencies of holdings	Percentages to total No. of holdings	Average size per holding
Under 5 acres	674	54.8	2.6
Under 10 acres	989	80.6	4.0
Under 25 acres	1,176	95.8	5.76
Under 100 acres	1,227	99.9	7.14

Thus, 54.8 per cent of the holdings were found to be under 5 acres, and their average size was 2.6 acres, which certainly is an uneconomic unit. The Intensive Family Survey of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry also arrived at identical conclusions, regarding size distribution of holdings in the State.[2]

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[1] Rural Man-Power and Occupational Structure, Op. cit., p. 249.

[2] Report on Intensive Survey of Agricultural Labour, Vol. IV-South India, 1955; See pp. 75-76.

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holdings by size of holding

Between 5-10 acres		Between 10-50 acres		Between 50-100 acres	
No.	Extent	No.	Extent	No.	Extent
2,040	2,374	1,111	3,436	87	1,015
..	..	..	..	..	..
1,972	2,554	1,184	3,376	61	719
..	..	..	..	..	..
1,763	2,465	608	2,508	42	700
2,277	2,186	1,437	4,396	128	1,046
..	..	..	..	..	..
1,757	2,620	776	2,885	30	422
1,203	2,662	362	2,791	9	337
2,936	1,877	2,906	4,814	328	1,613
2,050	2,733	807	2,352	50	888
2,736	2,060	1,418	2,614	223	1,392
2,936	2,644	1,775	3,161	106	1,413

Past History Of Mysore Panchayats

All the villages in the State are covered by 12,606 Village Panchayats. Administration of these Village Panchayats was governed by the Village Panchayat Act of 1926 until the Mysore Village Panchayat and District Board Act of 1952 was passed. The enactment of the 1952 Act was preceded by the appointment of a Committee called the Integration and Co-ordination Committee for Local Bodies. This Committee, which was appointed in September 1949, had a wide term of reference and its Chairman was Shri V. Venkatappa, Speaker of the Mysore Legislative Assembly.

Mysore has a long history of local government legislation. According to the report of the Venkatappa Committee, the local bodies engaged the attention of the Government as early as 1881. A Mysore Local Boards Act was passed in 1902. Under this Act, the Taluk Boards and the Panchayat Unions more or less occupied the position of agents under District Boards and were expected to discharge such duties and functions as were delegated by the District Boards. In 1918, there was another enactment called the Mysore Local Boards and Village Act. This enactment increased the strength of the elected representatives of the local bodies. The system of Union Panchayats was abolished and Village Committees designated as Village Panchayats came into being. These were, however, placed under the supervision of the Taluk Boards. The strength of these Panchayats was fixed at a maximum of 7, the minimum being 3. The majority of these members were elected representatives. These Panchayats were charged with certain functions and duties consisting of the following:

(1) Normal duties connected with the maintenance of roads, sanitation, water supply, drainage, etc.

(2) Village improvement works as specified in the Village Improvement Scheme.

(3) All other communal works connected with education, irrigation, pasture land, village forests, village courts, etc.

The Panchayat Act Of 1926

The income from local taxation in the villages and other sources, such as grant from the Government or Taluk Boards, was constituted into a fund, the Village Fund, and was administered by these Panchayats. Within a few years of the introduction of this scheme, 833 Panchayats and 8,884 village committees were constituted. Owing to the paucity of funds and general neglect by the administration, this initial success, however, did not yield any significant results. In 1923, a local self-government conference was called and on the recommendations of this conference, the Government enacted the Mysore Village Panchayat Act, 1926. Under this Act, the Deputy Commissioner was the authority for establishing a Panchayat for every village or group of adjoining villages, and had the additional power to vary as occasion demanded the grouping of these villages. The strength of the Panchayats was fixed at a minimum of 7 and a maximum of 12. The members could either be wholly elected, or partly elected and partly nominated. The election was by adult franchise. The Act transferred to the Panchayats the management of village forests, minor tanks, supervision of village schools, etc. The functions were divided into obligatory and discretionary and covered a general power to do everything necessary for and incidental to the functions delegated to the Panchayats, e.g., construction of roads, bridges, erection of buildings, conservancy, drainage, etc. The Act also gave the Panchayats the power to impose certain obligatory taxes and some optional taxes. The obligatory taxes included a tax on all houses, shops, or places of trade or business, vacant sites, etc. The optional taxes could be levied only after getting the support of two-third of the members of the Panchayats and obtaining the Government's sanction, and it could be for any specific duty or work and could be commuted into labour under certain conditions.

The financial position of Village Panchayats under the 1926 Act would be found in the following table:

TABLE 141 [1]

Year	Opening Balance Rs.	Receipts Rs.	Total Rs.	Expenditure Rs.	Closing Balance Rs.
1937-38	31,85,538	11,13,859	42,99,397	10,81,173	32,18,224
1938-39	32,17,825	8,43,559	40,61,384	13,58,082	27,03,302
1939-40	27,01,764	9,96,492	36,98,256	12,51,478	24,46,778
1940-41	24,45,761	12,86,668	37,32,449	12,39,004	24,93,415
1941-42	24,80,098	16,09,384	40,89,482	12,56,516	28,32,996
1942-43	28,32,966	16,86,216	48,19,182	11,02,244	34,16,938
1943-44	33,90,104	17,51,581	51,41,685	10,06,358	41,35,387
1944-45	41,35,327	19,65,502	61,00,829	11,88,996	49,11,833
1945-46	49,11,883	25,81,975	74,93,808	21,70,430	53,23,378
1946-47	53,12,378	30,05,469	83,17,847	24,64,040	58,76,248
1947-48	58,76,248	25,60,997	84,37,245	22,86,099	61,51,146
1948-49	61,65,230	20,74,599	82,39,829	24,65,221	37,74,608

The 1952 Act: Election Of Panchayats

Now we will describe the main features of the Mysore Village Panchayat and District Board Act of 1952. The Act provides for the establishment of Panchayats as far as possible on the basis of one Panchayat for a population not less than 2,000 and not more than 5,000, but adjoining villages can be grouped to provide for the above population standard. Panchayats are elected on the basis of adult suffrage, but no person of less than 25 years of age can become a member of the Village Panchayat. In cases where adjoining villages are joined to constitute a Panchayat, their representation is in proportion to their population. Seats are reserved for scheduled castes. Elections are held by ballot or by show of hands. The minimum membership of Panchayat is 10 and the maximum 20. The Panchayats elect one among themselves as chairman of the Panchayat, who is responsible for carrying on the day-to-day administration. The Act provides for the appointment of a secretary to the Panchayat. He has to work under the discipline and control of the chairman and the Government.

Panchayat Functions

Obligatory functions of the Panchayats are as follows: Construction, repair and maintenance of village roads including cart tracks, culverts and bridges but not those which are under the control of any other body or of the Government; construction of drains and disposal of drainage water; cleansing of streets, tanks and wells and other public places; construction, repair and maintenance of public wells, tanks and ponds for supply of water for drinking, washing and bathing purposes; regulation of buildings, shows, shops and other public entertainment houses; removal of encroachments on public streets and property vested in the Panchayats; opening and maintenance of burial grounds; establishment, management and maintenance of cattle pounds; sanitation; taking preventive and curative measures in cases of epidemics and general care of public health; care and regulation of public buildings and properties vested in the Panchayats; planting of trees; regulation of fairs, festivals, etc.; maintenance of essential statistics of the villages, regulating the sale and preservation of meat; licensing of hotels; regulating, curing and tanning of hides; filling in of unsanitary depressions and levelling lands, etc.

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[1] Report of the Integration and Co-ordination Committee for Local Bodies, p. 74.

The discretionary functions of the Panchayats are as follows : providing relief for travellers; relief for the poor and sick; control of cattle stands and grazing grounds and other communal waste lands; development of education, library and reading room; agricultural co-operation; rural industries and trades; lighting of the village; improved breeding and medical treatment of cattle and prevention of cattle diseases; construction and maintenance of slaughter houses; maternity and child welfare; establishment and maintenance of dispensaries, singly or in co-operation with other Panchayats; control and management of village forests; village defence; organisation, supervision and control of rural development or multi-purpose co-operative societies, etc.

Judicial Aspect

Panchayats in the State have no judicial functions or powers. The Government of Mysore is not in favour of entrusting the Village Panchayats with any judicial functions. According to an authoritative spokesman, "The system of having bench magistrates in urban areas was tried for a number of years and was given up as it was not a success. The system of Village Munsifs was also given up. It is feared that any attempt in this behalf in respect of Village Panchayats might also fail in the conditions obtaining at present and that it would be better to proceed with caution."

This question also engaged the attention of the Venkatappa Committee. It appointed a sub-committee to go into the question which has the following to say on the subject :

"After a careful examination of the various aspects of the question, the majority of the members opined that the Village Panchayat should be given a chance to administer justice in criminal as well as civil sphere, subject to certain restrictions...... The question of conferring this privilege on any Village Panchayat should be in the discretion of the Government who, after they are satisfied that conditions necessary for impartial justice, such as high standard of education, moral integrity, prevail, may entrust a Panchayat with powers to try cases both of civil and criminal nature". The Committee recommended that the Panchayats should be given the right to try cases of a criminal nature only in respect of offences contemplated in the Cattle Trespassers Act. the Mysore Public Health Act and the Police Act. The Committee also stipulated that the village courts should only have powers to impose fines and should not try cases under such Acts which contemplate imprisonment as punishment. It was for amending the existing Act for the establishment of village courts in Mysore so as to allow money-suits of the value not exceeding Rs. 500, and not involving immovable properties to be instituted before these courts. The Government, it is obvious, did not accept these suggestions of the Committee.

Sources Of Revenue

The sources of revenue of the Village Panchayats are income through taxation and grants from the Government. The Act lays down that the Government shall assign all the Panchayats in the State the amount equal to 12½ per cent of the net land revenue collected in the State, the amount to be allotted to each Panchayat being such as the Government may from time to time determine.

The Panchayats can levy the following taxes :

(a) Taxes on all houses, shops, places of trade or business, vacant sites, *hittals* and carts kept in the village or villages in its jurisdiction. These taxes, however, should not exceed the maximum specified in Schedule I of the Act;

(b) Village Improvement Tax commutable into contribution of labour; such taxes are not to be less than Rs. 6 or more than Rs. 10 per family per annum;

(c) Taxes on professions;

(d) Taxes on shandis, fairs and festivals.

Village Panchayats spend their revenue on obligatory and discretionary duties already indicated above.

Table 142 (p. 578) gives some general information about Village Panchayats in Mysore State between 1948-49 and 1952-53, as also an account of their income and expenditure in these years.

Conclusion

The resources of the Panchayats have been far from sufficient to enable them to meet even their obligatory duties. It is said that if the Village Panchayats are properly grouped and made into economically viable units, the situation may improve. The Government was considering a proposal to give the Village Panchayats a portion of the health cess.

TABLE 142

Particulars	1948-49	1949-50	1950-51	1951-52	1952-53
A. GENERAL INFORMATION					
1. No. of V.Ps.	10,402	10,380	10,012	10,409	10,409
2. Population ..	50,82,350	49,36,952	53,78,636	59,23,678	59,29,790
		(In	Rupees)		
3. Total income from all sources ..	21,05,718	15,92,026	16,99,392	18,22,895	16,19,021
4. Total income from rates and taxes	10,35,685	7,96,856	10,24,616	10,64,360	10,22,234
5. Per capita incidence, etc. ..	0-6-4	0-5-0	0-4-10	0-5-6	0-5-4
6. Per capita incidence, etc. from taxes ..	0-4-0	0-8-7	0-4-1	0-4-0	0-4-2
B. DETAILS OF INCOME					
I. TAX REVENUE					
1. General property tax (on house lands) ..	10,14,869	8,81,109	10,79,988	10,12,554	10,26,373
2. Service Taxes, Lighting, etc. ..	8,468	7,814	10,782	9,294	8,053
3. Local Fund Cesses					
4. Octroi and terminal taxes					
5. Tolls					
6. Taxes on goods and passenger carriers by roads or inland waterways ..	3,442	2,435	2,228	2,030	2,467
7. Taxes on Vehicles, Animals and Boats ..	10,115	6,696	7,168	7,966	7,256
8. Profession Tax ..	9,995	10,580	11,761	11,193	11,025
9. Theatre tax					
10. Pilgrim tax					
11. Town Improvement, Betterment tax ..	8,000	300	1,050	..	57
12. Other taxes, cesses, rates, etc. ..	44,892	57,435	63,911	1,10,744	1,04,801
TOTAL ..	10,99,731	9,66,369	11,76,888	11,53,781	11,60,032
II. NON-TAX REVENUE					
(a) Grants from Government :					
(i) For Roads and Buildings ..	2,09,342	2,02,469	1,34,740	2,36,964	1,78,985
(ii) For Education ..	..	..	..	..	..
(iii) For Medical and Public Health ..	..	..	..	..	..
(iv) For other purposes ..	8,56,178	4,98,947	4,48,083	4,79,700	3,86,785
TOTAL ..	10,65,529	7,01,436	5,82,823	7,16,664	5,65,770
(b) Fees, Fines, etc.	12,132	10,325	12,975	13,511	11,056
(c) Miscellaneous ..	2,08,056	1,14,589	1,02,046	1,24,818	1,06,331
GRAND TOTAL ..	12,85,708	8,26,350	6,97,844	8,54,993	6,83,157
C. DETAILS OF EXPENDITURE					
(i) Administration ..	1,34,680	1,25,454	1,57,943	1,63,747	1,70,114
(ii) Service (Water supply, drainage, conservation, lighting, etc.) ..	3,95,032	3,24,149	2,72,776	3,47,602	3,92,325
(iii) Medical and Public Health ..	33,470	33,821	26,750	33,794	39,726
(iv) Roads and Buildings ..	9,08,607	5,27,716	3,72,013	5,44,364	6,46,791
(v) Miscellaneous ..	9,99,330	6,58,028	7,44,714	8,02,332	7,90,157
TOTAL ..	24,71,119	16,69,168	15,74,196	18,91,839	20,39,113

Under Section 92 of the Mysore Village Panchayat and District Board Act, there is a provision enabling the District Boards to extend their co-operation to Village Panchayats. It is laid down that every District Board shall render such assistance as may be available with it and which may be required by the Village Panchayats free of cost, and that it shall be lawful for a District Board to supplement works of development undertaken by Panchayats within the district by undertaking schemes which are beyond the powers of the Panchayats. Apart from these, we are not aware of other steps which may have been provided for proper control and co-ordination of the work of Village Panchayats in the State.

In the absence of any detailed reports about functioning of Panchayats in Mysore, it is not possible for us to evaluate their work. It is obvious that the Panchayat institution in Mysore is older than in most other States of India. The present standard of administration, however, is not very satisfactory and requires much improvement.

CHAPTER XXVI

PEPSU

THE Patiala and the East Punjab States Union was inaugurated on July 15, 1948, by the late Sardar Patel. It comprises the former states of Patiala, Kapurthala, Jind, Nabha, Faridkot, Malerkotla, Nalagarh and Kalsia. The State so constituted had an area of 10,099 sq. miles, with a population of 34,24,060 in 1948. According to the 1951 Census, 34,93,685 persons lived in 64 towns and 5,708 villages grouped under 25 tehsils and 8 districts. The density of the areas which now constitute the Patiala and East Punjab States Union, was 266 in 1921, 287 in 1931, 338 in 1941, as against 347 in 1951.

The Livelihood Pattern

In PEPSU, 25,34,684 persons or 73 per cent of the total population depend on agricultural sources, and 27 per cent are dependent upon non-agricultural sources of income. District Mohindergarh has the largest percentage of agricultural population (83 per cent) while Patiala (62 per cent) has the lowest. Kohistan with a dependence of 80 per cent, Sangrur and Bhatinda with a dependence of 77 per cent each, Barnala with a dependence of 68 per cent, Kapurthala with 65 per cent and Fatehgarh Sahib with 63 per cent of its population dependent on agriculture, fall in between these two extremes.

In Mohindergarh district, where the soil is stony and uneven, 66 per cent of the agricultural population are cultivators of land mainly owned. The corresponding percentage of cultivators of owned lands and their dependents is 66 for Kohistan, 54 for Bhatinda and Sangrur and 48 for Barnala. The figure for Fatehgarh Sahib is 35, for Kapurthala 31 and for Patiala 30 per cent. The Livelihood Category II, that is, cultivators of land mainly unowned, are 6 per cent of the agricultural population in Bhatinda, 9 per cent in Sangrur, 20 per cent in Patiala, 6 per cent in Barnala, 22 per cent in Kapurthala, 17 per cent in Fatehgarh Sahib, 11 per cent in Mohindergarh and 9 per cent in Kohistan. Livelihood Category III (i.e., agricultural labourers) is as low as 3 per cent of the agricultural population in Kohistan, and in the remaining districts its percentage varies from 5 in Mohindergarh to 14 in Bhatinda.

In the State as a whole, 16,89,126 persons belong to Livelihood Category I, 4,04,877 to Category II, 3,58,676 to Category III and 82,005 to Category IV. In other words, 48 per cent of the agricultural population belongs to Class I, 12 to Class II, 10 to Class III and 2 to Class IV.

Distribution Of Population In Villages

In PEPSU, as in the Punjab, the average village has a central or main *abadi* which is a continuous collection of houses conspicuous by a number of *pucca* houses wherein reside its inhabitants. Some other houses my be found in the fields but they are generally not for habitation purposes but are used only in active agricultural seasons. Out of a total population of 34,93,685 in 1951, 28,28,175 was rural and 6,65,510 was urban, i.e., a proportion of 81 : 19. The population per village is 495. Out of 1,000 persons of general population in PEPSU, 810 live in villages and 190 in towns. Out of 100 persons of rural population, 22, 62 and 16 generally live in villages with a population of 500, 500—2,000 and 2,000—5,000, respectively. The population per village in Patiala is 429, in Barnala, 928, in Bhatinda 944, in Kapurthala 447, in Fatehgarh Sahib 443, in Sangrur 936, in Mohindergarh 746 and in Kohistan 74.

The Agricultural Labourers

The General Village Survey of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry of the Government of India included 16 villages in its Survey with a total of 2,328 families. The following table[1] shows the distribution of families according to occupation :

TABLE 143

Occupation		Number of families		Percentage to total number of families
Agricultural owners		1,054		45.3
Agricultural tenants		365		15 7
Agricultural workers :				
(a) Without land ..	252	290	10.8	12.4
(b) With land ..	38		1.6	
Total agricultural families ..		1,709		73.4
Total non-agricultural families ..		619		26.6
ALL FAMILIES		2,328		100.0

It follows from the above table that 290 families, constituting 12.4 per cent of the total number of families, belong to agricultural workers. The General Family Survey of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry surveyed 16 villages of the State comprising 2,318 families.

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[1] Agricultural Wages in India, Op. cit., pp. 242-243.

The total population was 12,367. Of the 2,318 families in the sample villages, 74.9 per cent were agricultural and 24.4 non-agricultural. 17 families had no specific stable occupation. The following table[1] shows the distribution of families by occupation :

TABLE 144

Family Occupation	Total No. of families	Total No. of persons in families	Average size of family
1. Agricultural landownership ..	1,063	5,885	5.54
2. Agricultural tenancy ..	366	2,261	6.19
3. Agricultural labour : ..	308	1,546	5.02
(a) Families with land ..	16	99	6.19
(b) Families without land ..	292	1,447	4.96
4. Total agricultural families ..	1,737	9,698	5.58
5. Total non-agricultural families	564	2,623	4.65
6. No specific stable occupation ..	17	46	2.70
7. All families	2,318	12,367	5.33

Families of agricultural landowners and their dependents constituted 45.9 and 15.8 per cent respectively of the total number of families surveyed. The agricultural worker's families formed 13.3 per cent of the total.

Caste Composition

The General Family Survey gives the following picture of the caste composition of the surveyed population: 39.4 per cent of the total were Vaishyas, 4.7 Brahmins, 2.2 Kshatriyas, 22.8 scheduled castes and tribes and 8.5 per cent backward classes. The remaining 22.4 belonged to other classes. 82.8 per cent of the agricultural workers' families belonged to scheduled castes and tribes. About 58 per cent of the agricultural owners were Vaishyas; 9 families of scheduled caste and 30 belonging to backward classes owned the land cultivated by them.

Size Distribution Of Landholdings

No figures are available regarding the size distribution of landholdings in PEPSU as a whole. The Census of Landholdings conducted by the Land Reforms Division of the Planning Commission excluded holdings below 10 acres. Size distribution of landholdings as given by the General Family Survey of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry would be found in Table 145 (pp. 584-585).

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[1] Rural Man-Power and Occupational Structure, Op. cit., p. 255.

It follows that 104 holdings out of 779 were under 5 acres. The largest concentration of holdings was in the size group '10 acres and under 25 acres'. About 39 per cent of the holdings were below 10 acres, covering 12.8 per cent of the total acreage. And in these 16 villages 5 families had holdings above 100 acres.

Constitution And Functions Of Panchayats

The PEPSU Panchayat Raj Act was brought into force in 1951. Now nearly all the villages of the State have been covered by Panchayats. Nagar Panchayats are formed on the basis of population. Such Panchayats may be formed for a village, or group of villages, so as to reach a population of 1,500. Panchayats are elected on the basis of adult suffrage. The voting is by show of hands at a general meeting of the voters. There are no wards and no nominations. The number of members of Panchayats varies from 5 to 9. The Sarpanch of the Panchayat is elected by the entire electorate. Nominations for all offices have to be accompanied by fees. A candidate for the office of Sarpanch has to pay Rs. 10, while a Panch of the Nagar Panchayat pays Rs. 5 and of a Nyaya Panchayat Rs. 10.

The Panchayats have compulsory as well as discretionary functions. Compulsory functions of Panchayats include maintenance, construction and repair of roads, bridges, etc.; cleansing of sources of water supply; sanitation; planting of trees; construction of buildings for public use; registration of deaths and births; preventive and remedial measures against epidemics; organisation of a Village Volunteer Force for watch and ward; regulation of *melas* and markets; management of common grazing grounds and allotment of places for storing manure.

The discretionary functions include medical relief and child welfare, organisation and celebration of public festivals, promotion of agricultural credit, maintenance of stores for providing improved seeds, fertilisers, etc., relief against famine, improving the breeds of cattle, primary education and promotion of cottage industries.

Besides these, the Panchayats are free to take up works designed to promote the uplift of the villages. They are free to make their own bye-laws and acquire land for their purpose.

Sources Of Revenue

The sources of revenue of Panchayats are enumerated in Section 116 of the Act. These are :

(1) All grants from Government or any levy paid;
(2) All fines imposed by the Adalat to be allotted equally among Sabhas in that circle;

TABLE

Size of holdings	Holder's Family Agricultural owners No.	Area (Acres)	Agricultural tenants No.	Area (Acres)
Under 1 acre	3	2.35	2	1.66
1 acre and under 2.5 acres	25	47.68	18	31.51
2.5 acre and under 5 acres	76	278.24	39	135.33
5 acre and under 7.5 acres	95	573.70	35	208.74
7.5 acre and under 10 acres	63	537.43	38	325.58
10 acre and under 25 acres	363	5,648.08	149	2,176.09
25 acre and under 50 acres	126	4,211.05	26	850.39
50 acre and under 100 acres	24	1,434.70	5	327.99
100 acre and above	4	483.5	1	111.67
Total	779	13,216.7	313	4,168.96
Average size of holding		16.97		13.32

Note :—Figures within brackets denote percentages to the total.

(3) All funds in respect of fines under the Act;

(4) Balance of proceeds of all funds including *Malwa* which were or are being collected for the common purposes of the village members in the Sabha area;

(5) All taxes, duties and fees imposed and realised under the Act.

The Act authorises the Panchayats to levy the following taxes:

(a) A tax on persons exercising any profession or other calling (other than agricultural), or carrying on any trade or business in Sabha area;

(b) A Hearth tax;

(c) A tax on the marriage of a male person;

(d) A tax on any person on the birth of a male child;

(e) A labour tax involving rendering of monthly labour in the Sabha area by all able-bodied males between the prescribed age limit for a prescribed number of hours of labour;

(f) The sale proceeds of all waste, such as dung or refuse, including dead bodies of animals, collected by the servants of the Panchayat and the refuse and other produce of the land vested in the Sabha.

Besides these, the Government can authorise the Panchayat to collect any tax which the legislature of the State has power to impose. Thus, for example, the Government can authorise a Panchayat to collect a surcharge on transfer of property on prescribed

145[1]

Occupation					
Agricultural workers		Non-Agricultural		Total number of holdings	Area (Acres)
No.	Area (Acres)	No.	Area (Acres)		
nil	nil	6	3.18	11 (1.0)	7.19 (0.1)
5	7.5	14	21.08	62 (5.4)	107.77 (0.6)
6	17.91	12	37.09	133 (11.6)	468.57 (2.6)
3	19.16	2	10.25	135 (11.7)	811.85 (4.6)
nil	nil	1	7.50	102 (8.9)	870.51 (4.9)
1	11.0	6	77.04	519 (45.0)	7,912.21 (44.6)
nil	nil	2	71.0	154 (13.4)	5,132.44 (28.9)
nil	nil	1	62.5	30 (2.6)	1,825.19 (10.3)
nil	nil	nil	nil	5 (0.4)	595.17 (3.4)
15	55.57	44	289.64	1,151 (100.0)	17,730.9 (100.0)
	3.7		6.58		15.40

rates depending on the value of the property.

The present sources are not sufficient enough to enable the Panchayats to carry the various development works which have been assigned to them. In certain cases Panchayats have taken up development works on their own initiative and for the purposes they have enforced voluntary taxes which they call *Bash*. This, however, is not a statutory tax and there are cases wherein people refuse to contribute their share. The Government is considering certain proposals to improve the income of the Panchayats.

Judicial Aspect: PEPSU's Distinctive Feature

The Panchayati Adalats have been vested with criminal, revenue and civil powers. They are classified as First Class and Second Class. For the present all the Panchayati Adalats in the State are classified as Second Class. They can hear Civil suits up to Rs. 200 and Revenue suits up to Rs. 100. The First Class Panchayati Adalats can hear Civil suits upto Rs. 500 and Revenue suits up to Rs. 200. On the criminal side the offences cognizable by the Panchayati Adalats comprise Sections 172, 173, 174, 264—267, 269, 277, 283, 285, 286, 288-294, 334, 352, 358, 379, 414, 403, 426, 428, 429, 447, 448, 509, 510 of the Indian Penal Code. They can also try offences under the Patiala Vaccination Act, Cattle Trespass Act, Canal Drainage Act, Juvenile Smoking Act, Gambling Act, etc.

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[1] **Rural Man-Power and Occupational Structure, Op. cit., p. 260.**

The Class I Adalats may on conviction sentence an accused to a fine not exceeding Rs. 200 or double the value of the damage or loss caused by the act of the accused, whichever is greater. The Second Class Adalats may sentence an accused to a fine not exceeding Rs. 100, or double the value of the damage or loss caused by the act of the accused, whichever is greater as above.

The Panchayati Adalats consist of 5 Nyaya Panches. Each Nyaya Panch is elected by a Nagar Sabha at the time of the election of the Nagar Panchayat and is, in addition to the members of the Nagar Panchayat, elected on that occasion. Where the population does not exceed 1,500, Panchayati Adalats have been formed of 4 Nagar Panchayats only. In such cases the Nagar Sabha having the largest population elects 2 Nyaya Panches so as to make up the total of 5. Generally, however, in view of there being only one Nagar Panchayat for each Nagar, village group alignments are generally not carried to the Panchayati Adalats.

The position of the Panchayati Adalats is thus independent of the Nagar Panchayat in as much as members of both are elected independently. But their functioning is inter-connected to a certain extent. All cases, whether civil, revenue or criminal, have in the first instance to be referred to the Nagar Panchayat by the plaintiff or complainant, as the case may be, for conciliation. The Nagar Panchayats constitute a Conciliation Board for each case, comprising usually of the Sarpanch and two Panches, one to be nominated by each party. In case this Conciliation Board fails in its work, it issues a certificate of non-conciliation within a period of 30 days of reference, and then the case goes to the Panchayati Adalat.

The expenses of the Panchayati Adalat have to be borne by the component Nagar Panchayats equally, and the income over and above the expenditure of the Panchayati Adalat, if any, is distributed equally among the Nagar Panchayats within its area of operation.

Commendable Judicial Work Of PEPSU Panchayats

The Panchayati Adalats started functioning on July 28, 1953. The provision of Conciliation Boards has great beneficial effect. This avoids unnecessary expenditure in litigation and the bitterness and rancour consequent upon litigation. Up to the end of the financial year 1953-54, the Nagar Panchayats had received 30,154 disputes for conciliation, and they succeeded in conciliating 22,684 disputes and issued 4,714 certificates for non-conciliation. Thus a balance of 2,756 applications was left in hand.

As for the Panchayati Adalats, an idea of the useful work done by them in 1953-54 would be had from the following :

		Civil	Revenue	Criminal	Total
1.	Previously pending cases with Panchayati Adalats ..	733	22	20	775
2.	No. of cases registered during the period under review	5,004	646	1,891	7,541
3.	Total No. of cases ..	5,737	668	1,911	8,316
4.	No. of cases decided ..	1,950	259	455	2,664
5.	Conciliation effected ..	1,935	288	777	3,000
6.	No. of cases pending ..	1,852	121	679	2,652

7.	Amount realised (total) : ..	..	Rs. 21,495-8-0
	As (i) Registration fee	..	Rs. 15,546-15-6
	,, (ii) Copying fee	..	Rs. 1,846-13-6
	,, (iii) Fines	..	Rs. 3,947-15-0
	,, (iv) Taxes and other funds	..	Rs. 153-12-0
8.	Amount deposited in the treasury	..	Rs. 139-0-0
9.	Expenditure	..	Rs. 8,095-6-11
10.	Balance	..	Rs. 13,261-1-1

Panchayat Staff: Control And Coordination

The Panchayat is authorised to engage staff according to its requirements within its means. At present there is hardly any staff with any Panchayat. The Government was considering a proposal for giving circle secretaries to the Panchayats and co-operative societies. These circle secretaries are to be appointed by the Panchayats. The Assistant Panchayat Officers and the District Panchayat Officers help the Panchayat in co-ordinating their day-to-day work. They are appointed by the Government. The Panchayats do not exercise any disciplinary control over them. In some cases village revenue officers, that is the *patwaris,* and some other field workers have been made responsible to the Panchayats for carrying on their duties properly. The Panchayats carry on their education, public health and other activities in co-ordination with the corresponding departments of the Government. The District Magistrate, Ilaqa Magistrates, Special Judges, District Panchayat Officers, etc., supervise the work of the Panchayats and Panchayati Adalats in their various capacities. Some of them can intervene in their affairs as Executive Officers. The provisions for appeal and interference by Executive Officers are regulated by the relevant provisions of the Act, and the rules made thereunder.

There is a separate Panchayat Department of the State Government and the Director of Panchayats is its administrative head. He is assisted by District Panchayat Officers and Assistant Panchayat Officers who supervise Panchayat work. The duties of the Panchayat Officer and Inspector of Co-operative Societies have now been amalgamated. The Act empowers the Government to abolish a Panchayat for dereliction of duty. A new Panchayat has to be elected on dissolution.

Work Of PEPSU Panchayats

Though the State Panchayat Act was enforced in 1951, a real spurt in Panchayat activities came in July 1953, when Panchayati Adalats were inaugurated. The good work done by the Panchayats in 1953-54 would be evident from the following description of their activities in this period :

S. No.	Description of activities	Achievements
1.	No. of trees planted	1,35,432
2.	Libraries opened	36
	Amount spent	Rs. 4,030
3.	No. of manure heaps removed from village *abadies*	62,366
4.	No. of Manure pits dug	33,899
5.	Drains constructed	181
	Length in Yards	46,662
	Amount spent	Rs. 53,571
6.	Wells sunk	78
	Amount spent	Rs. 78,510
7.	Adult Education Centres	263
8.	Culverts constructed	225
	Amount spent	Rs. 24,334
9.	Encroachments removed	11,204
10.	No. of ponds filled up	506
11.	Dispensaries organised	14
	Amount spent	Rs. 10,085
12.	Pavements of streets	128
	Amount spent	Rs. 52,750
13.	Panchayat Ghars built or repaired	25 plus 1 under construction
	Amount Spent	Rs. 62,364
14.	Schools :	
	1. Constructed	158
	2. Under Construction	96
	3. Proposed to be constructed	138
	4. Run by Panchayats	85

S. No.	Description of activities	Achievements
	5. Amount collected ..	.. Rs. 8,19,332
15.	Approach roads	
	Length in miles	324 ms. 3 fg. 173 yds.
	Amount spent ..	.. Rs. 170
	No. of men employed ..	.. 34,852
16.	Circular roads	
	Length in miles	124 miles 5 fg.
	Amount spent ..	.. Rs. 375

Criticism Of State Panchayat Administration By Estimates Committee

The enthusiasm shown by the PEPSU villagers for Panchayats would be clear from the above record of their activities. It appears, however, that the State administration failed to make use of this initial enthusiasm, and administrative inefficiency and delays came in the way of further advance. This is apparent from a Report of the Estimates Committee in April 1955, headed by Shri Bhagwant Singh, a Congress M.L.A.[1]. The Report said that although the Panchayat legislation came into force in the State nearly four years ago, the Panchayats "have not yet started their work in full swing in the real sense due to their lack of knowledge, experience and proper guidance by the field staff which itself is untrained."

The Committee severely criticized the working of the State Panchayat Department, with particular reference to its failure to ensure payment of the land revenue share to village bodies, delay in conducting elections, sanction of budget and framing of model bye-laws.

The Report stressed the need of early training of Panches in procedural, judicial and other administrative matters through more frequent visits to villages by Departmental Officers. It also wanted instruction to be imparted to the officials who are mostly "untrained and unqualified." "The Department has wasted full three years in chalking out a programme for prescribing any test or examination for Assistant Panchayat Officers. So long as the Assistant Panchayat Officers are ignorant about the procedural matters of law, they cannot usefully guide the Panchayats."

Referring to slackness in the disbursement of the land revenue share to the Panchayats, the Report said: "The amounts might have been credited in the individual accounts of the Panchayats concerned with the co-operative banks without the information of the Panchayats and either the District Panchayat Officers or Assistant Panchayat Officers might have slept over the bank pass-books."

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[1] Hindustan Times Evening News, 2-4-1955.

TABULAR REPRESENTATION XI

No. of Villages and Panchayats, etc.	Legislation passed	Amendment	Village Panchayats		Sources of Revenue of Panchayats
			How Constituted	Powers in Village Management	
Total No. of Villages: 5,708. No. of Nagar Panchayats: 1,008. Villages covered: 4,474. No. of Panchayati Adalats: 214.	PEPSU Panchayat Raj Act, 2008 (1951). Panchayats started functioning on 28th July 1953.		Constituted on population basis. One Nagar Panchayat for every 1,500 people. Elected on the basis of adult suffrage. There are no nominations. President is elected by the entire electorate. There is a separate Panchayat Deptt. in the State. No. of members is between 5 to 9. Nominations for all offices, Nagar Panchayat and Adalat membership accompanied by fees: President Nagar Sabha Rs. 10, Panch Rs. 5 and Nyaya Panch Rs. 10. Elections for various offices are held separately. For administrative convenience Nagar Panchayat may form a Sub-Committee. Every adult is member of the Nagar Sabha. Term is life time.	Obligatory functions: Maintenance, construction and repair of public roads, bridges, etc., cleansing of sources of water supply, drainage, sanitation, planting of trees, construction of buildings for public use, promotion of village industries, registration of deaths and births, street lighting, etc. Discretionary functions: Medical relief, provision for storage facilities for seed, fertilizers, implements, etc., relief against famine, improving cattle breeds, establishment and maintenance of primary schools. They can also undertake works designed to promote social, moral and material well being of the people. It can make bye-laws. Acquire land for its purposes and collect fines and taxes.	Panchayats can impose compulsory as well as voluntary taxes. The Govt. assigns 1|10th of the land revenue collected from the area to that Panchayat. Panchayats can levy taxes on trades, calling or profession, a hearth tax, a tax on the marriage of male person, a tax on the birth of his male child, a labour tax on all able bodied males between the prescribed age limit; duty on the transfer of property. It can sell all dust, dirt, dung or refuse including bodies of animals collected by the servants of the Panchayats. All Govt. grants, collections from the fines imposed and donations are allocated to the Panchayats. All profits out of fines and other levies of the Adalat are equally distributed among the Nagar Panchayats.

PANCHAYAT INSTITUTION IN PEPSU

Nyaya Panchayats		Report on the working of Panchayats		REMARKS
How Constituted	Powers	Gram	Nyaya	
Panchayati Adalat is formed for every 7,500 people or five Nagar Panchayats. Established under the PEPSU Panchayat Raj Act, 2008 (1951). Composition of the Panchayati Adalat is independent of the Nagar Panchayat. It is elected directly by the Nagar Sabha. The functioning of the Nagar Panchayat and Panchayati Adalat is inter-connected. All cases, civil, criminal or revenue, have first to be referred to the Nagar Panchayat, which constitutes Board usually comprising the Sarpanch and other Panches. Failing conciliation a certificate of non-conciliation is issued within 30 days of the reference. The expenses of the Panchayati Adalat have to be borne by the component Nagar Panchayats equally. Each Adalat consists of five Nyaya Panches. Each Nyaya Panch is elected by the Nagar Sabha. There is generally only one Nyaya Panch for each Nagar Sabha. Sarpanch is elected by the Panches and is known as Pradhan. A Panchayati Adalat shall maintain a fund known as Panchayati Adalat Fund.	Civil, criminal and Revenue Powers are vested. Two classes of Adalats, first class and second class. At present all are second class Panchayats. They can hear civil suits upto Rs. 200 and revenue suits of Rs. 100. First class Adalats can hear civil suits upto Rs. 500 and Revenue suits upto Rs. 200. Both can try certain specified criminal cases. First Class Adalats can impose a fine of not more than Rs. 200 or double the value of the loss caused by the accused. Second class can impose a fine of Rs. 100. Both Adalats can try cases committing affray, any act likely to endanger public health, negligent conduct, committing public nuisance, sale of obscene book, etc., voluntarily causing hurt, criminal trespass, house trespass, wilful maiming of animals of the value of Rs. 50, unlawful employment of a boy. Class one Adalats have wider powers. They can, in addition, try cases for criminal intimidation, voluntarily causing hurt and breach of trust. There is provision for appeals against decisions of the Adalats.	Nagar Panchayats received 30,154 cases for conciliation. Of these 22,684 conciliated and 4,714 were granted certificates for non-conciliation.	Panchayati Adalats started functioning in July 1953. Conciliation has a great effect in reducing litigation. It reduces rancour and bitterness. In the Adalats 8,316 cases were registered. Of these 2,664 were decided and 3,000 conciliated. They have succeeded in minimizing the differences in different parties.	Panchayats are expected to improve the social and economic conditions of the rural areas and train the rural people in democratic ways. Panchayats can play an important part in the planning and execution of development projects under Five-Year Plan. The provision of conciliation is novel to this State. It admits the principle that conciliation must precede adjudication. Conciliation Authority should be different from the Adjudicating Authority.

The Committee urged proper and timely action by the Panchayats in preparing budget estimates, and by the Director of Panchayats for their approval.

The Committee described as "sheer wastage of public money," the delay in conducting elections by the Department. "In spite of the fact that full staff was provided for Panchayat work early in the year 1952, the work was not started for full one year in the whole of the State and for over two years in some of the tehsils." All this goes to show, the report said, that most of the time was wasted by the Department simply in preparations.

Panchayats And Police

The Committee also viewed with concern the "hostile attitude" of the local police towards the Panchayats. It said : "The police officers perhaps feel that their prestige in villages has lessened due to establishment of Panchayats. They take them as their rival. Instead of having co-operation of Panchayats in preserving law and order in the villages, the local police treat the Panches just like ordinary villagers and sometimes harass them unnecessarily." It recommends that a special procedure be prescribed for prosecuting the Panches whenever they are found guilty of cognizable cases.

CHAPTER XXVII

SAURASHTRA

SAURASHTRA, the birthplace of the Father of the Nation and rich in traditions and glory, where some of the most memorable chapters of Indian history have been enacted, had had probably the healthiest Panchayat growth in India under the fostering care of Shri U. N. Dhebar, its Chief Minister from the very inception of the State till 1954. Saurashtra literally means a good country and it is by this name that this State has been mentioned in the epics of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata, Puranas* and ancient inscriptions. Thus, for example, an ancient text says : [1] "There are five jewels in Saurashtra, namely, rivers, women, horses, while fourth is Somnath and fifth is Dwaraka." Nature has given this State definite boundaries which clearly demarcate it from the rest of the country. On the west, south and north surge the restless waves of the Arabian Sea while in the north-east stretches the desert-land of Kutch which screens it off from Pakistan. This land of Saurashtra of rolling hills, undulating plains and flashy rivers, literally a balcony of Western India, has an area of 21,451 square miles according to the 1951 Census.

Area And Population After Integration

Saurashtra came into existence on April 15, 1948, with the integration of 222 States of Kathiawad area. It includes the following 30 jurisdictional states : Nawanagar, Bhawanagar, Porbandar, Dhrangadhra, Morvi, Gondal, Jafrabad, Wankaner, Palitana, Dhrol, Limbdi, Rajkot, Wadhwan, Lakhlov, Sayla, Chuda, Vala, Jasdan, Amarnagar (Thana Devli), Vadia, Lathi, Muli, Bajana, Virpur, Maliya, Kolda Sangani, Jetpur, Bilkha, Patdi and Khirasara. The population of Saurashtra according to 1951 Census was 41,37,359, which shows an increase of 16.2 per cent over the population of the integrated territories in 1941. During 1931-41, the population of the area increased by 20.5 per cent. The density of the State was 119 in 1921 and 193 in 1951. The component districts of the State are : Halar, area 3,890 square miles, population 5,74,472; Madhya Saurashtra, area 4,660 square miles, population 10,45,675; Zalawad, area 4,425 square miles, population 4,95,928, Gohilwad, area 4,675 square miles, population 10,20,130; and Sorath, area 3,801 square miles, population 10,01,154.

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[1] सौराष्ट्रे पञ्चरत्नानि नदि नारी तुरंगमाः ।
चतुर्थं सोमनाथञ्च पञ्चमं हरिदर्शनम् ॥

The Livelihood Pattern

The proportion of the different agricultural livelihood classes in the total general population of the State is as follows: Livelihood Category I, 32.76 per cent; Livelihood Category II, 8.34 per cent; Livelihood Category III, 3.76 per cent; Livelihood Category IV, 1.76 per cent. Thus, in the total general population of the State only 46.62 per cent belong to agricultural classes and the remaining 53.38 per cent to non-agricultural classes. Saurashtra, thus, is one of the few States of the Indian union where the total agricultural population is less than the total population of non-agricultural classes.

In terms of urban and rural population, 66.3 per cent of the population of Saurashtra lives in rural areas. Says J. B. Bowman, the Superintendent of Census operations for Bombay, Saurashtra and Kutch: "The distinguishing feature of Saurashtra was the high percentage of the population who lived in small villages with less than 500 inhabitants or in medium sized villages with 500—2,000 inhabitants. There was a rather pronounced gap in the 2,000—5,000 sector, before the urban category was reached." [1]

The Agricultural Classes

In Saurashtra, according to the 1951 Census, the agricultural classes formed less than 50 per cent of the population of every district, except Sorath, where they formed 51 per cent. One of the factors making for a high ratio of non-agricultural to agricultural population in the districts of Saurashtra is the wide distances that separate the population centres; the other factor operating in the case of Saurashtra is the fact that it is relatively highly urbanised.

In Saurashtra, the percentage of population returned as belonging to Livelihood Class I was as high as 70.3 per cent of the total agricultural population. In Zalawad district the percentage was only 51.7, but in Madhya Saurashtra and in Sorath it was over 70. Says Bowman [2]: "These Saurashtra figures seem very high, when one considers that *Girasdari* abolition had not been effected by the time of the Census. It may be that people returned themselves according to what they shortly expected to be, the effect of the legislation being anticipated." 16.0 per cent of the agricultural population in Bombay, Saurashtra and Kutch was placed by the 1951 Census in Livelihood Class II, and 14.1 per cent in Livelihood Class III. Says Bowman [3]: "The factors making for high percentages of Livelihood Class III in the agricultural population would seem to be the land tenure system prevailing in the area, the cultivation of a cash crop such as cotton which stimulates a demand for agricultural labour and existence of irrigation facilities which seem to have a similar effect." The Collector of Gohilwad District in Saurashtra attributed the importance of Livelihood Class III in that district to the existence of irrigation facilities.

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[1] Census of India, 1951, Vol. IV, Bombay, Saurashtra and Kutch, Part I, Op. cit., p. 20.

[2] Ibid, p. 50.

[3] Ibid, p. 51.

The Agricultural Workers

The General Village Survey of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry, which surveyed 12 villages in Saurashtra comprising a total of 1,294 families, has given the following occupational pattern of surveyed villages :

TABLE 146 [1]

Occupation and status	Number of families		Percentage to total number of families	
Agricultural owners ..	..	380		29.4
Agricultural tenants ..	..	238		18.4
Agricultural workers :				
(a) With land ..	13)	204	1.0)	15.7
(b) Without land ..	191)		14.7)	
Total agricultural families	..	822		63.5
Total non-agricultural families	..	472		36.5
ALL FAMILIES	..	1,294		100.0

It follows that 204 families or 15.7 per cent of the total belong to the category of agricultural workers. The General Family Survey of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry surveyed 1,288 families in 12 villages of Saurashtra, and it found that of the total number of families 66 per cent were agicultural of which 29 per cent were landowners, 17 per cent tenants and 20 per cent agricultural workers.

Caste Composition

Of the total number of 1,288 families, 531 or 41.22 per cent were Brahmins, Kshatriyas or Vaishyas while 141 families or 10.94 per cent belonged to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, and 580 or 45.02 per cent to backward classes. Of the total 375 cultivating owners' families, 270 or 72 per cent belonged to the Vaishya community and 70 or 18.66 per cent to the backward classes. About 69 per cent of the tenant families were from backward classes. The occupation of 65 or 46.09 per cent of the scheduled caste families was agricultural labour.[2]

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[1] Agricultural Wages in India, Op. cit., p. 272.

[2] Rural Man-Power and Occupational Structure, Op. cit., p. 282.

Size Distribution Of Holdings

The Census of Landholdings conducted by the Land Reforms Division of the Planning Commission gives the following picture of holdings in Saurashtra according to area owned :

TABLE 147

Exceeding (acres)	But not exceeding (acres)	No. of holdings	Area (acres)
0. ..	1.0	4,165	2,248
1.0 ..	2.5	8,658	15,742
2.5 ..	5.0	21,545	81,881
5.0 ..	7.5	20,613	1,27,696
7.5 ..	10.0	26,097	2,27,277
10.0 ..	12.5	22,150	2,54,062
12.5 ..	15.0	23,673	3,25,273
15.0 ..	17.5	21,360	3,49,012
17.5 ..	20.0	24,096	4,53,012
20.0 ..	25.0	37,478	8,48,241
25.0 ..	30.0	31,948	8,77,465
30.0 ..	35.0	25,846	8,41,451
35.0 ..	40.0	20,191	7,55,792
40.0 ..	45.0	13,765	5,85,082
45.0 ..	50.0	10,677	5,09,239
50.0 ..	60.0	13,103	7,19,086
60.0 ..	75.0	9,336	6,23,773
75.0 ..	100.0	5,657	4,80,398
100.0 ..	150.0	2,297	2,72,760
150.0 ..	200.0	107	69,730
200.0 ..	300.0	188	44,297
300.0 ..	500.0	70	25,780
500.0 ..	1,000.0	15	9,059
More than 1,000 ..		4	6,309
	Total	3,43,339	85,04,660

It follows that 34,368 holdings, that is, about 10 per cent of the total number of holdings were of 5 acres and less, and covered a bare 99,901 acres out of total holding area of 85,04,660 acres, that is, hardly 1.5 per cent of the total holding area. Further, only 2,681 holdings, or a bare 0.7 per cent of the total number of holdings were of 100 acres and above, but these among themselves covered 4,27,935 acres, or about 5 per cent of the total holding area.

The Proud Record Of The Saurashtra Panchayats

An idea of the proud record of Saurashtra Panchayats would be had from the following: On August 15, 1955, out of 4,356 villages of the State, Panchayats had been established in 2,057 villages, covering 18,87,550 persons out of a total rural population of 27,69,395, that is, 68.5 per cent of the total. In the Panchayat villages the Government was spending Rs. 1-8 per person, which is more than any expenditure per person by any department in any part of India.

Before the formation of Saurashtra, there were about 129 Gram Panchayats in the former princely state of Bhavnagar. The Panchayat Act of Saurashtra is not based on any imitation of the old state laws. It is an Act which is framed, keeping in view all the salient features of Saurashtra, its special characteristics, prowess, culture, etc. It came into being as Ordinance No. 57 of 1949. The objects and reasons for this Act clearly declare the following:

"In order that the people of villages—

(1) may conjointly think out matters relating to their own welfare;
(2) may manage their own affairs;
(3) may carry on functions of village defence and other local utility, by infusing spirit of self-help in people;
(4) may decide petty civil suits and criminal cases, locally and cheaply;
(5) may encourage and develop small-scale cottage industries by giving a fillip to constructive programmes, and thus conduct an efficient administration of the Panchayats,

It is desirable to pass this Ordinance."

This was amended in 1950. The amendment brought into being the Saurashtra Gram Panchayat Madhyastha Mandal, which is a statutory body to look after the establishment, working and development of the Gram Panchayats in Saurashtra. In the new Act, a provision has been made for voluntary establishment of Panchayats at the request of village people and the Gram Panchayat Madhyastha Mandal with District Panchayat Mandals, one for each district, i.e., 5 in all, work for growth of proper spirit and consequently for establishment of Panchayats. The number of Panchayats functioning at the end of the year 1950-51 was 400. During 1951-52, 439 new Panchayats were formed and the total reached 839 at the end of that year. At the end of 1952-53, the number was 1,289, while at the end of the year 1953-54 it reached 1,644. By the end of May 1954, 1,785 Panchayats covering 1,871 villages of Saurashtra had been established.

Constitution Of Panchayats: Principle Of Unanimity

The principle followed for the constitution of Panchayats is, generally speaking, one Panchayat for one village on the basis of adult suffrage. Villages in Saurashtra are not mere hamlets, average population per village being 600 to 750 souls. However, where the village is utterly small or has very limited resources, it is persuaded to join the neighbouring village for formation of the Panchayat. This grouping is done by securing almost unanimous consent of the people.

The statutory Saurashtra Gram Panchayat Madhyastha Mandal has been the key body helping in the commendable Panchayat development of the State. This Board had on it persons commanding confidence of the village community as well as officers. This Board was and is a link between the Government and the entire network of Panchayat organisation in Saurashtra. It functions through its district head. This district head is responsible along with local revenue authorities to create an urge amongst villagers for Panchayats. After some preliminary work is done in the village, people are persuaded to cast off factious mentality and their first village Panchayat is appointed, as far as possible, unanimously. Some kind of election does take place. Fifteen days' clear notice is given before the day of election. On the appointed day a village assembly consisting of all adult members is called and the elections are held according to simple rules framed for the purpose. It is done by show of hands. First, the assembly elects its Sarpanch and then other members, their strength being fixed in proportion to the population of the village. The minimum number is five and the maximum is fifteen. Village is not classified into wards, as the intention is to keep up village community feeling. Elections in 99 per cent of cases go without a contest. The system is working well and there is no intention to change it. Seats are reserved for Harijan and a lady member. These also are elected according to the procedure mentioned above. The basis of this election is an auxiliary agency of a semi-official character, which assists the people continuously, guides them and encourages them. Since it is a semi-official Board, it offers a common platform for officers and influential leaders of the village life in Saurashtra to meet together, discuss problems of common interest and assess administrative requirements first hand. The whole process of chewing and digesting takes place at the Board level and what goes out is then practically the unanimous advice or guidance of the State and the leaders of village community. It is received by the villagers with a degree of confidence, which a mere executive, administrative or even popular guidance would not receive. Moreover, the whole thing being considered in advance at the official and non-official level, there is the least chance of any conflict arising in the minds of the village community. The Board has got to take in all cases an objective view of the problems of the villagers, for the decisions are to secure almost unanimous approval of the village community.

Advantages Of The Principle Of Unanimity

The preliminary work, as stated above, also includes removal of points of conflict in the village itself. It means a little delay in establishing the Panchayat, but once the points of conflict are dissolved, the road is made smooth for Panchayat organisation. Practically, the unanimous support of villagers adds to the dignity, status and hold of the Panchayats. Representatives of the Board are always careful to see that this hold is not abused and a balance is preserved continuously. But the resulting advantage is tremendous. The party fever does at times corrode the atmosphere, but constant vigilance on the part of the executive and the Board members has been successful in keeping it out, and Congressmen and non-Congressmen alike are working together at the Panchayat level. Everything is being done to keep their minds fixed on their problems. It may be that in course of time party feeling may get the better of this procedure. But we are confident that having seen the advantages of the working on the basis of almost unanimous support, neither the people nor the Panchayat representatives will be satisfied with working on party lines and they must revert sooner or later to the procedure to which the Government clings with all its faith and conviction. Government also makes it clear to the people in the villages that it can give vast powers only to an organisation commanding the fullest confidence of the people. Any deterioration of that condition will mean reduction of the powers of Panchayats to merely municipal functions. The people also understand the great responsibility which is cast upon them by generous delegation of powers under the Panchayat legislation.

Grades Of Panchayats: A Novel Contribution Of Saurashtra

The distribution of powers to Panchayats is based more or less on a graded system. Every field activity affecting village life and every aspect of their problems is mentioned in detail and powers also clearly stated. Section 18 of the Panchayat legislation expounds the powers in a manner that every problem of the village is pictured before the people of the village and its Panchayat.

First the Panchayat is placed in the "C" class. The "C" Class Panchayats are entrusted with powers regarding general welfare activities affecting the village except revenue recovery and judicial functions. After the probation period is over, the Panchayat is promoted to the "B" Class and gets powers of revenue recovery. After these powers have been satisfactorily discharged, the Panchayat gets judicial powers. The two wings of Panchayat organisation, i.e., the responsibility and powers of recovery of land revenue and deciding normal cases arising in villages, which were clipped during the British regime, are slowly reappearing. There are today in Saurashtra many "B" Class Panchayats who recover revenue on behalf of Government, maintain registers, lend *Taccavi* on behalf of Government and recover it. The very experience breeds a sense of responsibility in the leaders of the village community and throws on the people also a responsibility, who are standing by the Village Panchayat on the pain of losing prestige and reputation with the Government and the public at large.

Nyaya Panchayats

Every Panchayat formed under the Panchayat Act is having a Nyaya Panchayat. The Nyaya Panchayat consists of five members who are elected by the members of the Gram Panchayats from amongst themselves. The Sarpanch of the Gram Panchayat is also the President of the Nyaya Panchayat. The Nyaya Panchayats have done good work. Most of these dispose of cases on compromise basis, rather than by following the rules of procedure which have not still attracted the illiterate populace. Some of the Gram Panchayats have shown better results by trying cases according to the rules of procedure too. The Nyaya Panchayats have been successful in reducing litigation to a good extent, though group differences in the villages have sometimes been reflected in them.

The following proposals were under the consideration of the State Government for the improvement of the work of Nyaya Panchayats :

(1) There should be a single Nyaya Panchayat for five Panchayats, it being understood that the cases will be decided by members presided over by members from villages other than those where the matter arises.

(2) There should not be any concurrent jurisdiction. Nyaya Panchayats should be given exclusive jurisdiction to try cases upto a certain limit and such cases should not be entertained by any other courts of law. The appeals against the decisions of the Nyaya Panchayats may, however, lie to any court other than a Nyaya Panchayat, for concurrent jurisdiction engenders a rivalry between two authorised bodies and increases ligitation rather than diminish it.

Sources Of Revenue

The Panchayats get grant-in-aid from the Government varying from 17¼ to 33½ per cent of the actual revenue collected during the previous revenue year. Thus "C" Class Panchayat gets 17½ per cent, "B" Class 25 per cent and "A" Class 33 per cent of the revenues. The Government have also transferred incomes from cattle pound and *Bham*—a cess on caracasses. Over and above the grants, the Panchayats can get income from tolls, and taxes such as the wheel tax, house tax, entertainment tax, hotel licence, octroi duty, sanitary cess, water tax, etc. These are shown in Appendix J to the Act. Panchayats can also get incomes from manure, fines and fees, donations, gift, etc.

The Panchayats prepare budgets for the expenditure proposed to be made from the revenues. Every year such a budget is to be prepared and submitted to the Collector, who is the President of the District Panchayat Mandal. The Budget, after the sanction, is sent back to the Panchayat. The Panchayat expends money according to the provision for each item in the budget. The village Panchayat calls a meeting of the Panchayat and passes resolutions for every item of expenditure, calls for the estimates and plans of certain works and then undertakes the works, keeping detailed accounts of materials, labour and technical assistance secured on payment as well as on a voluntary basis. Prior sanction of the Government is needed only when Government help is sought in part or full.

Panchayat Staff: Supervision

The President of the Panchayat is elected by the whole village, i.e., by all adult members in the village assembly. There is one trained secretary for either one or for a number of Panchayats according as they are big or small, to help them in the executive work. He is appointed by the Collector on the post of a *Talati* and then given on loan to Gram Panchayat Madhyastha Mandal and is governed by the conduct rules as applied to Government servants. As long as he is on loan, he is under the discipline of the Panchayat and the Madhyastha Mandal.

There is no other staff except the secretary but if the Panchayat is a big one, it may appoint a clerk for octroi collection, revenue collection work, etc. Some Panchayats engage part-time servants for street-lighting, scavenging and other works. They are appointed by the Panchayat by a resolution of the Executive and on petty salaries or allowances.

The Government of Saurashtra issued a special circular ordering all departments to co-operate with the Panchayats in their multifarious activities. The Panchayat is considered to be the only responsible village organisation to be approached for any rural scheme. Panchayats also are always ready to help all departments of the State. Yet, this spirit of co-operation has not still touched the lowest rung of the village revenue officers, i.e., the *Talatis*, Village Police and Police Patels. Such a spirit is being developed by slow degrees.

The Collector of each district of the State is also the President of the Jilla Panchayat Mandal. The District Panchayat Officer, who happens to be the Secretary of this Mandal, is the Executive Officer for the Panchayats in his district.

The Gram Panchayat Madhyastha Mandal

The Central Statutory Body, the "Saurashtra Gram Panchayat Madhyastha Mandal," supervises and checks up the activities of the Panchayats. This Madhyastha Mandal is composed of 21 members including the President, who is the Minister in charge of Rural Development Department. Other members include 5 M.L.As, 5 District Collectors, 7 public workers interested in Panchayat activities, the Chief Secretary, the Secretary in charge of the Rural Development Department and the Chief Panchayat Officer. The Chief Panchayat Officer works as the Secretary of this Mandal.

Under the Madhyastha Mandal, there are five Jilla Panchayat Mandals, one for each district. The Jilla Panchayat Mandal is presided over by the District Collector. The other members include 2 M.L.As, 3 representatives of Panchayats, 2 members interested in Panchayat activities, the Chief Panchayat Officer and the Jilla Panchayat Officer. The Jilla Panchayat Officer is the Secretary of the Jilla Panchayat Mandal. These Mandals hold meeting every two months and lay down the policy, frame rules for various items in the actual working of the Panchayats, etc.

The Department does not possess and exercise powers to supersede a Panchayat, but it does give its opinion about the supersession of the defective Panchayat and sends it to the Government for necessary action. Thus, the Panchayat is superseded by a Government Resolution. Such a Panchayat, when superseded, is regulated by some special officer appointed for the purpose.

In order to help the Panchayats in the day-to-day work of administration, the Madhyastha Mandal decided to give them trained personnel. For this purpose a Training Class for Panchayat Secretaries was started at Junagadh, and every year about 80-100 trained secretaries are made available. Till today 700 trained secretaries have thus been made available by them and they are appointed in different groups of Panchayats in different districts.

Panchayat Work

Panchayats in Saurashtra have shown good progress in every field of activity. Most of the Panchayats have taken proper steps to remove manure heaps either by contacting the Harijans or *Bhangis* or by way of compost manure, and are thereby helping cleanliness in the villages. Wells for drinking purposes and water-troughs for cattle are being properly looked after.

A good number of Panchayats have managed to keep medical chests in their villages. These chests have been supplied by the Ayurvedic Department of the Government and they have proved very useful to villagers, who were without any sort of medical relief arrangement till the formation of Saurashtra.

Most of the Panchayats are carrying on local works from the Panchayat funds as well as through voluntary contributions in cash or by voluntary labour. The Panchayats have also taken to opening night literacy schools as well as libraries and reading rooms. Progress in this direction is also satisfactory.

It is noticed that prejudice against untouchability is subsiding in the villages. In every village one seat for Harijans is kept reserved and to such seat almost all Panchayats have selected one Harijan to take part in every meeting of the Panchayat. Where there are wells for drinking purposes for Harijans, they are repaired by the Panchayats and in many a place Harijans and public fetch water from the common public well. It will be proper to add here that during the year 1953-54, there was a remarkable progress in this direction. 218 Panchayats have officially declared the village well open to all without any distinction of caste or creed. Moreover, Kolki and Gomta Panchayats of the Madhya Saurashtra District and Simroli in the Sorath District have declared the local temples open to Harijans.

The Panchayats are assisting the Government of Saurashtra in enforcement of Cattle Trespass Act and Vaccination Act by way of executing the functions under Clauses 4, 5 and 14 of the former Act and by way of persuading the public of the village for vaccination under the latter Act. The 'B' Class Panchayats recover the land revenue and they have shown very satisfactory progress. The Panchayats also recover other dues or taxes which are levied including the octroi dues, House Tax, *Bham,* Sanitary Cess, Entertainment Tax, etc., which they are allowed to levy under the Act.

Panchayat Income And Expenditure In The Early Years

The Saurashtra Panchayats, in fact, showed commendable results even in their early years. The following table shows the income of Panchayats in different districts of Saurashtra from different sources in 1951-52 :

TABLE 148

Sources of Income	Gohilwad	Zalawad	Madhya Saurashtra	Halar	Sorath	Total
Grant-in-aid	4,62,462	2,09,504	3,11,343	2,90,348	2,18,604	14,92,261
Mapun	2,126	..	..	..	..	2,126
Bham	23,525	4,311	2,686	411	11,629	45,562
Octroi	9,271	..	33,476	8,920	23,406	75,073
Cattle Pound Fees	1,051	2,459	3,399	3,369	832	11,110
House Tax	..	..	22	80	..	102
Entertainment Tax	..	156	22	171	..	343
Wheel Tax	..	75	..	..	..	75
Shop Tax	..	..	12	..	..	12
Hotel Tax	..	48	48	..	514	610
Toll Tax	..	..	..	..	..	..
Licence fees for Hotels	428	135	1,414	727	418	3,122
Other taxes	1,155	..	0	11	9,652	10,818
Other fees	30	..	690	106	..	736
Gifts	9,724	561	2,203	1,901	5,621	20,010
Contribution	4,169	..	7,443	1,440	..	13,052
Unclassified taxes	27,673	1,894	..	..	..	29,567
Total	5,41,614	2,19,137	3,62,668	3,07,484	2,70,678	17,01,579

It follows from the above table that the largest single item of income of the Panchayats in Saurashtra has been from grants-in-aid from the Government. This is in contrast with some other States where Panchayats have suffered on account of absence of adequate State aid. Year-wise, Saurashtra Panchayats have received the following grants-in-aid from the Government :

1950-51	Rs. 6,55,000
1951-52	Rs. 14,92,000
1952-53	Rs. 17,79,900
1953-54	Rs. 9,91,000
1954-55	Rs. 31,61,000

Thus, in these 5 years the grant-in-aid has increased by almost 5 times.

Some of the Panchayats get very small grants on account of small land revenue. Again, the salary, etc., of the Panchayat Secretaries was to be borne by these Panchayats and hence there was a handicap to these Panchayats in the matter of undertaking development works. Taking this condition into consideration the Government have taken two good decisions in the direction and have made the path of Panchayats smooth. The Government have decided to grant as much extra grant as necessary to make up a minimum of Rs. 500 for each such Panchayat. They have also decided to shoulder the responsibility of payment of salaries to the Panchayat secretaries. On account of these decisions Panchayats secure better conveniences to far as welfare works are concerned.

The expenditure incurred by Saurashtra Panchayats in different activities in 1951-52 will be found in the following table :

TABLE 149

Source of Income	Gohilwad	Zalawad	Madhya Saurashtra	Halar	Sorath	Total
Sanitation and Health ..	10,209	17,900	11,895	9,375	18,925	68,304
Light	9,642	20,340	5,717	16,756	8,884	61,339
Medical Relief ..	7,127	2,817	771	822	1,757	13,294
Village Schools and Night Schools	12,450	..	27,414	..	360	40,224
Library and Reading Rooms	8,420	5,104	5,610	1,461	3,171	23,766
Public Works ..	2,10,062	56,211	79,295	1,44,091	77.045	5 66.704
Agriculture and Preservation of Forest ..	3,232	6,072	1,437	2,463	1,681	14,885
Breeding and Protecting of Cattle	11,045	3,387	8,352	7,330	10,735	40,849

Land Revenue Collection By Panchayats

We would like to emphasise another point. In sharp contrast to the hesitation showed by many States to confer the power of collection of land revenue on Panchayats, the Government of Saurashtra boldly decided to go ahead with the experiment from the very inception of Panchayats and most commendable results were witnessed even in early years. The following table shows land revenue recovered by Saurashtra Panchayats in 1951-52 :

TABLE 150

District	No. of Panchayats empowered to recover land revenue.	Amount of Land revenue (fixed) (Rupees)	Amount recoverable during the year (Rupees)	Amount actually recovered (Rupees)	Arrears (Rupees)
Gohilwad ..	16	1,82,112	25,109	23,069	1,030
Zalawad ..	3	69,912	19,877	18,641	1,135
Madhya Saurashtra	1	34,053	17,027	16,924	101
Halar	2	52,370	39,321	60,646 (21,717 recovered more)	391
Sorath	1	28,457	14,228	14,228	..
Total ..	23	3,66,806	1,15,564	1,33,521	3,761

The Panchayats in Saurashtra have attracted the public mind by their good progress. In order that these Panchayats may be able to shoulder the responsibilities that have come upon them, conferences of Sarpanches are held every year at district and subdivision level. These conferences afford a good opportunity to all those who are interested in Gram Panchayat activities. There the Sarpanches come in contact with one another and also with official and non-official workers, narrate their experiences, com-

TABULAR REPRESENTATION XII

No. of Villages and Panchayats, etc.	Legislation passed	Amendments	Village Panchayats	
			How Constituted	Powers in Village Management
Total No. of Villages: 4,356. No. of Panchayats on 31-5-54: 1,785. No. of Villages covered by Panchayats: 1,871.	First legislation: Saurashtra Gram Panchayat Act, 1949.	1949 Act Amended by Ordinance 14 of 1950.	Panchayats can be formed in villages with a population of less than 2,000, or villages with a population between 2,000 and 10,000. But in the latter case Govt. sanction is essential. The principle is one Panchayat for each village. Election is based on adult franchise. The No. of members of Panchayats varies between 5 and 15. The term of office is 3 years. Panchayats are classified in three grades A, B and C. At first all are 'C' grade Panchayats. But as they undertake more responsibility their status is raised. President of the Panchayat is elected by the whole of the village adult population. There is a Central Statutory Body known as the Panchayat Madhyastha Mandal, which supervises and checks up the activities of the Panchayats. Under the Madhyastha Mandal are five Dist. Panchayat Mandals. Under it come the Village Panchayats. These Mandals lay down policy and frame rules for various items, etc. Panchayats are allowed to develop and not enforced from above. There is provision for reservation of seats for Harijans and women members in the Panchayat.	Panchayats are of 3 classes. Every Panchayat at the begining is C class and undertakes municipal and general functions. Limited judicial power is also granted. When C class Panchayat undertakes revenue collection work, it is promoted to B class and when Panchayat works well it is raised to A class. A class Panchayats enjoy all powers and functions under the Act. There are 5 B class and 4 A class Panchayats. Functions of the Panchayats embrace all spheres of village life. They are responsible for the preservation of morality, sanitation and public health, education and culture, public works, preservation of village forests, improvement of live-stock, village self-defence and philanthropic work like famine relief. They have also to maintain register of births and deaths and promote education. Panchayats have power to grant remission of land revenue in times of emergency. They can make rules and bye-laws.

PANCHAYAT INSTITUTION IN SAURASHTRA

Sources of Revenues of Panchayats	Nyaya Panchayats		Report on the working of Panchayats		REMARKS
	How Constituted	Powers	Gram	Nyaya	
Panchayats can collect taxes and levies imposed by Govt. or levy taxes sanctioned by Govt. Can levy house tax, tax on shops, wheel tax, entertainment tax, hotel licence, octroi, sanitary cess, water rate, etc. Panchayats can also get income from manure, fines and fees, donations, gifts, etc. Panchayats get grant-in-aid from the Govt. which is 17½% for C class, Panchayats, 25% for B class Panchayats and 33% for A Class of the actual revenue collected.	Every Panchayat elects a judicial board from its members. The Sarpanch of the Gram Panchayat is the President of the Nyaya Panchayat. Every Nyaya Panchayat has five members. Term of Office is 3 years.	Can award compensation to the victim. It can try cases for the recovery of money dues, movable property, etc. It can obtain maintenance for a woman or minor member of the family from its head. The suit should not be more than one year old. Appeal against the decision of the Board can be made with the district authorities within 30 days of the Panchayats' judgement.	Panchayats are helping Govt. in the enforcement of Cattle Trespass Act. B Class Panchayats collect land revenue and other village taxes, take steps to remove manure heaps and keep cleanliness. Many Panchayats have undertaken medical relief. Undertake local works through voluntary finance and labour. Some have opened night literacy classes. They are instrumental in removing untouchability.	They do good work and have disposed of cases on the basis of compromise. At present there is a Nyaya Panchayat for every Gram Panchayat. There should not be any concurrent jurisdiction. Nyaya Panchayats should be given exclusive jurisdiction, to try cases upto a certain limit. Appeals against a Nyaya Panchayat may lie in any court other than a Nyaya Panchayat.	At present nearly 40% of the population is served by Panchayats. Under the Five-Year Plan, 3,000 Panchayats covering 3,200 villages are to be formed. Out of the 4,356 villages in the State 1,726 are Zamindari villages. Work in these can be undertaken only after the introduction of Land Reforms. Panchayat Act needs to be amended. Powers of Panchayats should be increased. A spirit of compromise is also being infused.

pare their notes, place their problems which await solution, discuss them and arrive at solutions to their problems. These conferences greatly encouraged the Panchayats and breathed into them a new spirit through mutual co-operation and goodwill. They proved very useful.

First Saurashtra Panchayat Conference

The usefulness and success of such conferences gave impetus to the idea of calling a wider conference. Accordingly a representative Saurashtra Panchayat Conference, the first of its kind, was held at Wadhwan on April 16-17, 1955, under the presidentship of Shri Ravishankar Maharaj, a highly respected and veteran constructive worker of Gujarat. There was great enthusiasm all-round. The President of the Indian Union, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, who was to inaugurate the Conference, could not come on account of indisposition. The Congress President, Shri U. N. Dhebar, in his address to the Conference said : [1] "The heart of Bharat is in the village. It is a deeply-laid root which contains within itself the social economy and the age-old civility of Bharat. It is really a great fortune for India that attempts of sprinkling at and nourishing the roots of this social, economic, and cultural unity of Bharat are made through Gram Panchayats."

The Conference thoroughly discussed the various problems facing the Panchayats and adopted resolutions on Unity, Removal of Unemployment, Increasing the sources of Incomes, Small Savings Scheme, Progressive Panchayats, Eradication of Vices, *Shramadan* and *Bhoodan.* The Panches and Sarpanches delivered very interesting and illuminating speeches on these resolutions and the Report of the Wadhwan Conference published by the State Gram Panchayat Madhyastha Mandal merits study. This Saurashtra Panchayat Conference, like the Annual Conference of the Bihar Panchayat Parishad, has gone a long way in improving Panchayat work.

We would like to say in conclusion that the Panchayat experiment in Saurashtra is full of lessons for other States and deserves thorough study by all. The insistence on the principle of unanimity, so successfully tried, contains within it the seeds of untrammelled success of the Panchayat experiment. The division of Panchayats into three classes in accordance with the results shown by them, and upgrading them by the successes achieved is another novel idea which can usefully be followed in other States.

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[1] Proceedings of the First Saurashtra Panchayat Conference (Wadhwan 16-17 April, 1955), published by Saurashtra Gram Panchayat Madhyastha Mandal, Rajkot, 1955, p. 43.

CHAPTER XXVIII

DELHI

THE small Part 'C' State of Delhi is the only State in India where the urban population far exceeds the rural population. According to the 1951 Census, Delhi had a total population of 17,44,072, out of which 14,37,134 was urban and 3,06,928 rural. The non-agricultural classes comprised 90 per cent of the population and a bare 10 per cent was agricultural. The density of the State was 845 in 1921, which shot up to 1,101 in 1931, and 1,588 in 1941. In 1951, the density was 3,017 persons per square mile. This is explained by the large influx of refugees after Partition who settled mostly in the urban areas. The State has only one tehsil the limits of which are identical with those of the district and State of Delhi. The area of the State is 578 square miles. Out of the total general population of the State, cultivators of owned land and their dependents constitute 7 per cent, cultivators of unowned land 1 per cent, agricultural labourers 2 per cent and non-cultivating rent receivers a bare .2 per cent of the population.

Villages Of Different Sizes: Livelihood Pattern

Delhi State has 304 villages where live 3,06,938 persons. Thus the rural population is 18 per cent, and 82 per cent is urban. The population per village comes to 1,010 persons. Ten per cent of the population inhabit villages with a population below 500, 54 per cent inhabit villages with a population varying from 500 to 2,000, 24 per cent with a population varying from 2,000 to 5,000, and 12 per cent with population of 6,000 or over. The density of the rural area in 1951 stood at 613 persons per square mile as against 444 in 1941. In 1921. Delhi's rural population was 1,84,032, in 1931, 1,88,804, in 1941, 2,22,253, and in 1951 it was 3,06,938, with a growth-rate of 3, 16 and 32 per cent, respectively, in the decades 1921-31 1931-41 and 1941-51. Out of the total rural population, agricultural classes are 51 per cent, and 48 per cent are non-agriculturists. Among the agricultural classes, 37 per cent are cultivators of owned land and their dependents, 5 per cent are tenants and dependents, 9 per cent are agricultural labourers and dependents, and 1 per cent rent-receiving landlords. The actual figures are as follows : 1,72,186 belong to the agricultural classes, of whom 1,20 808 belong to Livelihood Category I, 16,492 to Category II, 29,276 to Category III, and 5,605 to Category IV.

Agricultural Labourers

Delhi is among the very few States where the General Village Survey of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry returns a lower percentage of agricultural labourers than what is given by the 1951 Census figures as would be seen in the following table : [1]

TABLE 151

Occupation and Status		Number of families		Percentage to total number of families
Agricultural owners		604		36.6
Agricultural tenants		173		10.5
Agricultural workers :				
(a) Without land	67)	69	4.1)	4.2
(b) With land	2)		0.1)	
Total agricultural families		846		51.3
Total non-agricultural families		805		48.7
ALL FAMILIES		1,851		100.0

The Survey covered 9 villages. The Survey observes : "Because of the facilities for non-agricultural employment available in the neighbouring areas, the number of families entirely dependent on agriculture was small." The above table shows that only 51.3 per cent of the families living in the villages were agricultural. Of these, only 4.2 per cent were agricultural workers. The occupational distribution of families as given by the General Village Survey would be found in the following table [2] :

TABLE 152

Family occupation	Total number of families	Total No. of persons in the families	Average size of a family
1. Agricultural landownership	587	3,543	6.0
2. Agricultural tenancy	167	924	5.5
3. Agricultural labour :	80	382	4.8
(a) Families with land	7	37	5.3
(b) Families without land	73	345	4.7
4. Total agricultural families	834	4,849	5.8
5. Total non-agricultural families	815	4,472	5.5
6. All families	1,649	9,321	5.7

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[1] Agricultural Wages in India, Vol. I, p. 318.

[2] Rural Man-Power and Occupational Structure, p. 351.

The table shows that the percentage of agricultural and non-agricultural families to the total number of families was almost the same, viz., 50.6 and 49.4. Of the agricultural families, 70.4 per cent were those of landowners, 20 per cent of tenants and 9.6 per cent of agricultural workers. The families of non-agricultural workers accounted for 21.3 per cent of the total non-agricultural families.

Caste Composition

The General Family Survey makes the following observations about the caste composition of the agricultural population :[1] "The landholding classes in the sample villages mostly belong to castes other than scheduled and backward classes. Of the total number of 80 agricultural workers' families, 63 or 78.8 per cent belong to scheduled castes and all these families were landless." It would follow from the above that in the State of Delhi, as in the neighbouring State of Uttar Pradesh, the caste and property differences in the rural areas tend to coincide.

Size Distribution Of Holdings

No clear picture is available about the size distribution of holdings in the State. The Census of Landholdings conducted under instructions from the Land Reforms Division of the Planning Commission was confined to holdings above 10 acres. The General Family Survey of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry conducted a census of 730 holdings belonging to the families living in the sample villages, the holdings covering an area of 6,351.63 acres. The following table gives the picture[2] :

TABLE 153

Size of holdings		No. of holdings	Area (Acres)
Under 1 acre ..	..	30 (4.11)	9.08 (0.14)
1 acre and under 2.5 acres	..	199 (27.26)	280.85 (4.42)
2.5 ,, ,, 5 ,,	..	103 (14.11)	351.37 (5.53)
5 ,, ,, 7.5 ,,	..	99 (13.56)	593.25 (9.34)
7.5 ,, ,, 10 ,,	..	57 (7.81)	478.00 (7.53)
10 ,, ,, 25 ,,	..	200 (27.40)	3,137.08 (49.39)
25 ,, ,, 50 ,,	..	37 (5.07)	1,257.00 (19.79)
50 ,, ,, 100 ,,	..	5 (0.68)	245.00 (3.86)
100 acres and above	..	nil	nil
Total	..	730 (100.0)	6,351.63 (100.0)
Average size of holding	..	..	8.70

Note: Figures in brackets denote percentages.

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[1] Ibid, p. 351.

[2] Ibid, p. 358.

It follows that 229 holdings, that is, 31.37 per cent of the total number of holdings, were below 2.5 acres, and they occupied a bare 4.56 per cent of the total area. Further 45.48 per cent of the holdings were under 5 acres and they together occupied only 641.3 acres out of the total holdings area of 6,351.63 acres, that is, a bare 10.09 per cent of the total area of holdings. The maldistribution of land is obvious.

Aim Of Panchayat Raj Bill

The Delhi Panchayat Raj Bill was introduced in the State Assembly on October 4, 1954, referred to a Select Committee and later enacted by the State Assembly. It was designed to establish and develop local self-government and to make better provision for village administration. Introducing the Bill, Shri Gopi Nath Aman, then Minister for Local Self-Government of Delhi State, said : "Its aim is to revitalise village corporate life and instil in the people the spirit of self-reliance and common endeavour to ameliorate their condition without depending too much on Government agency. The measure would assist in the administration of civil justice in the rural areas. Panchayats constituted in the villages would be representative of popular opinion and their field of activity would be quite extensive." Shri Aman pointed out that a special feature of the Bill was "the enabling power to Gaon Sabhas to impose voluntary physical labour on a large or limited scale to carry out development schemes in the rural areas, and the introduction of the Circle Panchayat which would be a larger elected body from a group of Gaon Sabhas."

Constitution Of Panchayats

We will now proceed to describe the main feature of the Delhi Panchayat Legislation. It is provided that the Chief Commissioner of Delhi, who is the executive head of the administration, shall by a notification establish a Gaon Sabha and shall decide the particular area to be included in and excluded from the jurisdiction of a Gaon Sabha. In matters relating to the establishment of a Gaon Sabha or in the working of a Gaon Panchayat, the decision of the head of the State, that is, the Chief Commissioner, shall be final and conclusive and the power of interpreting any provision of the Bill or any rules shall vest in him in all matters of dispute or otherwise.

The Act provides for the election of Gaon Panchayats on the basis of adult suffrage. The Chief Commissioner has the power to nominate a member or two to a Panchayat. On establishing a Gaon Sabha, a register of adult persons ordinarily residing in the Gaon Sabha area shall be maintained which may be revised at least once a year and which shall also serve the purpose of an electoral list.

Elections are to be held on joint electorate basis. A man of unsound mind will not be allowed to vote in the elections. There will be no fixed period of membership and the member shall continue until his death or until the abandonment of his residence in the Gaon Sabha area.

The *Pradhan* and *Up-Pradhan* of the Gaon Panchayat shall be the *Pradhan* and the *Up-Pradhan* of the Gaon Sabha. Two meetings of the Sabha are required to be held every year, one before the *Kharif* crop and the other after the *Rabi* crop. On receiving a request of at least one-fifth members of the Gaon Sabha, the Pradhan has the power to convene an extraordinary meeting of the Sabha. At each *Kharif* meeting, the Sabha shall consider and pass the budget for the following year, and the accounts of the previous year at its *Rabi* meeting. At both the meetings, the biennial reports of business from the *Pradhan* shall be considered. The term of office of the Gram Panchayat *Pradhan* and *Up-Pradhan* shall be three years to be reckoned from the date of election. The Chief Commissioner has the power to extend the term to five years. The *Pradhan* and *Up-Pradhan* can be removed from office only when a meeting for this purpose is called. The minimum quorum for such a meeting shall be two-third of the strength of the Sabha. In case the meeting decides to remove the *Pradhan* and *Up-Pradhan,* their successors will have to be elected forthwith.

The Gaon Panchayat is required to hold its meeting at least once in a month and the quorum for the Panchayat meeting shall be half the total membership. These meetings are to be presided over by the *Pradhan,* the *Up-Pradhan* or a member of the Panchayat authorised by the *Pradhan.* Members of the Panchayat are free to move any resolution on matters pertaining to administrative affairs.

Obligatory And Discretionay Functions

The Act lays down the following as the obligatory functions of the Panchayat : framing programmes of production; bringing waste land under cultivation; construction, repair and maintenance of public streets; medical relief; sanitation; upkeep and supervision of public property vesting in it; maintaining a register of births, deaths and marriages; regulation of *melas* and *hats;* setting up places for the disposal of dead bodies of human beings and animals; promotion of primary education; management of common grazing grounds; assisting the development of agriculture, commerce and industry; provision for establishment of maternity and child welfare centres; and allotment of places for storing manure.

The following discretionary functions are also vested in the

Panchayats : acting as a channel through which Government assistance reaches the village; securing minimum standards for cultivation; planting of trees; improving the breed of cattle; filling insanitary depressions; organising a Village Volunteer Force for watch and ward; development of co-operation; relief against famine; promoting goodwill and social harmony between different communities and undertaking any other welfare work.

Sources Of Revenue

A Gaon Sabha is entitled to establish a committee or committees to assist it in the discharge of its duties. There shall be a Gaon Sabha Fund which shall be utilised by the Panchayat to meet the expenses necessary for the discharge of its functions. The Act authorises the Panchayats to levy a tax on the rent payable by an *asami* under Delhi Land Reforms Act, 1954, at a rate not exceeding half an anna per rupee of such rent. The Panchayat can also impose a tax on land revenue payable by a *bhumidhar* on account of land held by him at a rate not exceeding one anna in the rupee. It can also levy a tax on trades, callings and professions as also a tax on buildings and hearths. A tax can be levied on every family at the rate of not less than one rupee per family per year. Taxes which come under the jurisdiction of both the District Board and the Gaon Sabhas, shall be levied by the District Board and Gaon Sabhas in a manner as may be prescribed. A Gaon Panchayat is entitled to enter into an agreement with the Government with regard to collection of any taxes or dues payable to the State or with all or any of the proprietors to collect rent on their behalf. The Panchayats are entitled for remuneration for such services on certain rates as may be prescribed. The Panchayats are also empowered to raise money for purposes of carrying out their obligations after obtaining the sanction of the Chief Commissioner.

The realisation of dues of Panchayats, such as arrears of taxes, shall be arranged by the Deputy Commissioner, on payment of 10 per cent of the amount realised.

Judicial Work: Circle Panchayats

The judicial functions of the Panchayats under the Act are entrusted to what are called Circle Panchayats. Circle Panchayats have been proposed for a population group of 5,000. Every Gaon Sabha is required to elect a number of Panches to Circle Panchayat. For population of 1,000 and below, only two Panches are elected, and three if the population exceeds 1,000. The Circle Panchayat is authorised to control and supervise the work of the constituent Gaon Sabha. A Circle Panchayat Panch is to hold office for three years from the date of his election. The Chief Commissioner has the power to extend the period to five years.

If a Gaon Sabha fails to elect members of the Panchayat, the Chief Commissioner can nominate a duly qualified person to the office. The Chief Commissioner also has the power to supersede a Gaon Panchayat or Circle Panchayat. The power to make rules vests with the Chief Commissioner.

CHAPTER XXIX

AJMER

AJMER is a mono-district State with an area of 2,417 square miles according to the Census of 1951. On all sides it is surrounded by the State of Rajasthan. The State is triangular in shape. The maximum length from north-east to south-west is 99, while from east to west it is only 45 miles. It has three sub-divisions, namely, Ajmer (area 688.6 square miles), Kekri (area 611.6 square miles) and Beawar (area 938.34 square miles). There are 714 villages in the State. The population of Ajmer in 1951 was 6,93,372. The density of the State stood at 170 persons per square mile in 1881, but according to the 1951 Census it was 287 persons per square mile.

The Livelihood Pattern

In Ajmer State, only 45 per cent of the population belong to agricultural classes, and 55 per cent to the non-agricultural classes. Of the total general population of Ajmer State, 37.5 per cent belong to Livelihood Class I, 3.14 to Livelihood Class II, 2.82 to Livelihood Class III, and 2.01 to Livelihood Class IV. It thus follows that the owner-cultivators constitute the overwhelming majority of the agricultural population, the tenants being a bare 3.14 per cent. The agricultural labourers are merely 2.82 per cent of the total general population, which percentage perhaps is the lowest in all India. According to the *Census of India 1951, Vol. X, Rajasthan and Ajmer,* the percentage of field labourers and farm servants in the total population has fallen from 7.7 per cent in 1901 to 6.0 per cent in 1911, 4.2 per cent in 1921 and 2.8 per cent in 1951.

The number of villages in Ajmer in 1891 was 741 which seems to have decreased to as low as 706 in 1941 and 707 in 1951. Of the total population of Ajmer, 3,95,608 is rural and 2,97,764 urban. Thus, 57.1 per cent of the population of the State lives in villages. The average population per village comes to 560. This average population per village has risen from 443 in 1921 to 509 in 1931, 534 in 1941, and 560 in 1950. A steady rise in the number of persons per village from decade to decade leads to the inference that the formation of new villages is not keeping pace with the growth of population.

Of the total rural population of Ajmer, 77.37 per cent belong to agricultural classes and 22.63 per cent to non-agricultural classes. Of the total rural population, 64.31 per cent belong to Livelihood

Class I, 5.08 per cent to Livelihood Class II, 4.75 per cent to Livelihood Class III, and 3.23 per cent to Livelihood Class IV.

In the total agricultural population of the State, 82.45 per cent were cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned, 6.92 per cent were cultivators of land wholly or mainly unowned, 6.21 per cent were cultivating labourers and 4.42 per cent non-cultivating rent-receivers.

The Agricultural Labourers: Caste Composition

In the case of Ajmer, the General Village Survey of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry has returned a lower percentage of the family of agricultural labourers than the Census returns as would be seen from the following table[1]:

TABLE 154

Occupation and Status	Number of families		Percentage to total number of families	
Agricultural owners		395		35.5
Agricultural tenants		414		37.2
Agricultural workers :				
(a) With land	28	61	2.5	5.5
(b) Without land	33		3.0	
Total agricultural families		870		78.2
Total non-agricultural families		243		21.8
ALL FAMILIES		1,113		100.0

Thus, among the agricultural classes, 299 or 26.9 per cent of the total number of families were cultivating owners. Non-cultivating owners numbered 50 or 4.5 per cent, while partly cultivating and partly non-cultivating owners were 46 or 4.1 per cent. Among the tenants, 382 or 34.3 per cent cultivated the lands themselves. The average size of the family was 4.9. Agricultural labourers were only 5.5 per cent of the total population.

The General Family Survey of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry has returned identical figures. The same Survey gives the following picture of the caste composition of the population: Only 10.5 per cent of the families of agricultural landowners belong to scheduled, tribal and backward classes; the remainder were Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, Jats, Jains, etc. As regards tenants, it was found that 30.5 per cent of the total number of such families came from the scheduled, tribal and backward classes. Nearly half the family of agricultural workers belonged to scheduled castes, aboriginal and backward classes. The Survey, however, adds that it is difficult to draw any general conclusion from these figures as families of agricultural workers were few in number.

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[1] Agricultural Wages in India, Vol. I., Op. cit., p. 293.

Size Distribution Of Holdings

The Census of Landholdings conducted by the Land Reforms Division of the Planning Commission gives the following picture of size distribution of holdings in the State:

TABLE 155

Grades of Holdings	Area owned	
	No. of Holdings	Area (in acres)
Upto 1 acre	31,540	1,400
from 1 to 2.5 acres	25,553	4,167
from 2.5 to 5 acres	21,192	75,345
from 5 to 7.5 acres	11,192	67,914
from 7.5 to 10 acres	6,811	59,670
from 10 to 12.5 acres	4,164	49,576
from 12.5 to 15 acres	2,818	38,299
from 15 to 17.5 acres	1,869	30,977
from 17.5 to 20 acres	1,387	25,804
from 20 to 25 acres	1,565	34,770
from 25 to 30 acres	999	27,099
from 30 to 35 acres	521	16,743
from 35 to 40 acres	237	12,560
from 40 to 45 acres	233	9,839
from 45 to 50 acres	144	7,465
from 50 to 60 acres	135	8,496
from 60 to 75 acres	100	6,746
from 75 to 100 acres	78	6,491
100 acres and above	81	17,837
Total	1,10,719	5,51,312

The following picture is thus revealed. As much as 78,285 holdings or about 70 per cent out of a total of 1,10,719 holdings were of 5 acres and less. But these 70 per cent holdings occupied only 80,912 acres or about 14 per cent out of a total holding area of 5,51,312 acres.

The Ajmer Gram Panchayat Bill was introduced in the State Legislature in 1953. After being passed by the State Assembly it received the assent of the President on November 25, 1954.

The Ajmer State Panchayat Act, 1954 (Act No. VII of 1954), has the object of establishing and developing local self-government in the State. The Act provides that the State Government may by notification declare any area to be a Panchayat area for the purposes of this Act, and shall specify a name for it. This area can also be altered.

Constitution Of Panchayats

The State Government can by notification establish a Panchayat in any Panchayat area. Every Panchayat shall consist of a President to be called *Pradhan*, a Vice-President to be called *Up-Pradhan*, and other members, not less than 9 and not more than 15 in number. The Act provides that a Panchayat may be wholly elected by the persons entitled to vote within the Panchayat area or wholly nominated by the State Government, or partly elected and partly nominated. It is provided that where the Panchayat is not wholly nominated, the President and the Vice-President shall be elected directly by the persons entitled to vote in the Panchayat area. The electorate consists of all the adult population in the Panchayat area barring persons of unsound mind, undischarged insolvents, those convicted of an election offence, etc. The Act provides for the reservation of seats for scheduled castes in proportion to their population. For purposes of election a Panchayat area may be divided into constituencies convenient for elections. Persons under 25 years of age, a *lambardar* or servant of the State Government, members of unlawful organisations, dismissed Government servants, etc., cannot seek election or be nominated to the Panchayat. The term of office of a Panchayat shall be three years from the date of the first meeting which shall be held after a general election. Any member of a Panchayat can be removed from office by the State Government for misconduct or neglect in the performance of his duties. Similarly, a Panchayat can remove the President or Vice-President by a two-third majority. The Act provides that two or more Panchayats may combine by means of a written agreement to appoint a joint committee for the performance of such business in which they may be jointly interested.

A meeting of the Panchayat must be held once a month. Emergency meetings can be called at shorter intervals. *The Pradhan,* assisted by the *Up-Pradhan,* is responsible for carrying out the administration of the Panchayat.

Panchayat Functions

The obligatory functions of the Panchayat are : construction, repair, maintenance, cleaning and lighting of public streets; medical relief; sanitation and taking curative and preventive measures against epidemics; upkeep, supervision, etc., of any building or property belonging to the Panchayat or transferred to it for management; registering births, deaths and marriages; removal of encroachments on public streets, public places and property vested in the Panchayats; regulating places for disposal of the dead bodies of human beings and animals and of other offensive matter; regulation of *melas,* markets, *hats* within the Panchayat area except those managed by the State Government; establishment of common grazing grounds and land for the common benefit of persons residing within its jurisdiction; the construction, repair and maintenance of public wells, tanks and ponds for the supply of water for drinking, washing and bathing purposes; regulating the construction of new buildings or the extension or alteration of any existing building; assisting the development of agriculture, commerce and industry; maternity and child welfare; promotion of co-operative farming; relief for the destitute and sick; framing programmes of production; construction and maintenance of public latrines; bring waste land under cultivation; arranging for the cultivation of land not cultivated or managed by owners; assisting in the implementation of land reform measures, etc.

The discretionary functions of the Panchayat include: planting of trees; improving the breed of cattle; filling of insanitary depressions; organisation of a Village Volunteer Force for watch and ward and for assisting the Panchayat and the Nyaya Panchayat in the discharge of their functions and for the service of summons and notices issued by them; development of co-operation and the establishment of improved seed and implement stores; relief against famine; assisting agriculturists in obtaining Government loans; extension of the *abadi*; promotion of goodwill and social harmony in the village, public radio set and gramophone and other activities for the well-being of the Community.

The Panchayat is given the control over all public streets and waterways situated within its jurisdiction and can construct new bridges or culverts as also divert or discontinue or close any public street, culvert or bridge, deepen or otherwise improve waterways, etc. The Act authorises the Panchayat to impose compulsory service upon persons resident in its territorial jurisdiction to perform labour for public purposes on works of public utility. Persons who refuse to comply can be punished with fine which may extend to Rs. 50. The Panchayats also have the power to enquire into the misconduct of officials, and on being satisfied about the misconduct, can report the observations to the superior officer who then has to enquire into the charges, take suitable action and inform the Panchayat of the steps taken.

A Panchayat may in respect of any area within its jurisdiction enter into a contract with the State Government to collect any dues or taxes, including land revenue payable to the Government, on being allowed by the State Government such collection charges as may be prescribed.

A Panchayat can appoint from among its members sub-committees for the discharge of its various administrative functions.

Sources Of Revenue

Every Panchayat shall have a fund which shall be utilised by the Panchayat for meeting charges in connection with its duties under the Act. The following shall be credited to the Panchayat fund: the proceeds of any taxes imposed under the Act; all sums ordered by a court to be placed to the credit of the Panchayat Fund; the sale proceeds of all dust, dirt or dung or refuse including dead bodies of animals collected by the Panchayat; such portions of the rent or other proceeds of *Nazool* property as the State Government may direct to be placed to the credit of the Panchayat fund: sums contributed to the Panchayat Fund by any local authority; all sums received by way of loan or gift; all sums as may be allotted to the Panchayat fund by any special or general order of the State Government.

The Act directs the State Government to pay to every Panchayat in each financial year a sum equal to 15 per cent of land revenue realised by it in respect of that Panchayat area. Further, the State Government may impose and realise a suitable surcharge on land revenue realised from within a Panchayat area, and the proceeds of such surcharges during each financial year shall be paid to the Panchayat of that area.

The Gram Sabhas can impose a tax on lands; a tax on trades, callings or professions; fees on the sale of goods in a market within the jurisdiction of a Panchayat, and fees on the sale of animals in the village market; a fees on transfer of immovable property; a tax on industries; a fees on solemnisation of marriage and other entertainments at such rates as may be prescribed; a latrine or conservancy tax; fees for the use of *Sarais, Dharamshalas,* etc., maintained by the Panchayat; a water-rate where water is supplied by the Panchayat; a lighting rate where the lighting of public streets is undertaken by the Panchayats; a drainage fee; a pilgrim tax; a tax on firewood and cattle, etc.

Panchayats may, with the consent of the persons on whom any tax, toll or fee is to be charged, commute the payment into a contribution of labour not exceeding thirty labour days in a year. Panchayats can also exempt people from paying taxes.

Judicial Aspect

Gram Sabhas may be divided into circles and a Nyaya Panchayat established for each circle. The Panches are selected from the members of Gram Sabha by the District Magistrate. The Sarpanch is also appointed by the District Magistrate. Each Gram Sabha sends five members. The tenure of office of a Nyaya Panchayat is three years.

Nyaya Panchayats can try certain civil and criminal cases. Civil suits for money dues on contract, for recovery of movable property, claiming compensation for wrongfully taking or injuring public property, for causing damage under the Cattle Trespass Act, may be tried by Nyaya Panchayats. If both parties agree, the jurisdiction of the court can be enlarged.

Criminal cases under sections 160, 174, 178, 179, 289, 290, 379, 380, 381, 411, 426, 430, 448, etc., of the IPC can be tried. The Nyaya Panchayats can impose a maximum fine of Rs. 50. No imprisonment can be awarded. All contraventions of the provisions of the Act are punishable by fines. Expenses of the Nyaya Panchayats are charged to the Gram Fund. No legal practitioner can appear in Panchayat courts. The Panchayats cannot revise or alter their judgement once it is passed. All suits have to be instituted before the Sarpanch. The Sarpanch can ask any person to execute a bond, if he apprehends breach of peace on his part. There is a provision for awarding compensation to the accused if he is wrongfully implicated in a case. Appeals against the judgement of the Panchayat can be made to the prescribed authority.

CHAPTER XXX

BHOPAL

THE State was constituted in June 1949. It comprises the territory of the former Bhopal State and has an area of 6,885 square miles. Most of the State is situated on the plateau and some 2,800 square miles are hilly and covered with forests. Among the Part 'C' States, Bhopal occupies the fifth position in area and the fourth in population. The State is divided into two districts, Sehore and Raisen. There are fourteen tehsils. Sehore district, which contains the city of Bhopal, has an area of 3,665 square miles and a population of 5,21,116. Raisen district has an area of 3,213 square miles and a population of 3,15,358. The density of the State as a whole is 122 persons per square mile. Sehore district has 142 persons per square mile and Raisen 98 per square mile. The population of Bhopal as recorded by 1951 Census, namely, 8,36,474, is the highest on record since 1901. Since 1901, the population has increased by about 25 per cent. This increase, however, is mainly on account of the growth of Bhopal city. If Bhopal city is excluded, the population in the State would be regarded to have an increase of only 4.4 per cent.

Out of every 10,000 persons, 6,555 or 65.5 per cent are directly dependent on agriculture for their livelihood and the remaining 34.5 per cent are supported by non-agricultural pursuit. Of this population, 37 per cent belong to Livelihood Category I, 7 per cent to Livelihood Category II, 20 per cent to Livelihood Category III and only 1 per cent to Livelihood Category IV. It follows that the agricultural labourers, that is, Category III, have a comparatively higher proportion in the total general population.

Distribution Of Population In Villages Of Different Sizes

There are 2,923 inhabited towns and villages in this State. Villages of under 500 population number 2,634 and they predominate in the State. Of the total population of 8,36,474, 7,00,411 or about 84 per cent is rural. As much as 4,28,262 or 61 per cent live in villages under 500 population. The average population of a village is 240. In Sehore, 75 per cent of the population is rural, 60 per cent living in villages of under 500 and 32 per cent in villages with a population of 500-2,000. In Raisen as many as 98 per cent live in villages—63 out of every 100 in villages of under 500, and 30 out of 100 in villages of 300-2,000. Of the total rural population of 7,00,411, about 77.4 per cent is totally dependent for its livelihood on agriculture and 22.6 per cent on non-agricultural pursuits. Sehore district is slightly more agricultural than Raisen. Owner cultivators and tenants are more numerous in Sehore and landless labourers and rent-receivers in Raisen.

The Livelihood Pattern

Out of every 10,000 persons in the agricultural population, 5,674 belong to Livelihood Class I, 3,054, that is, as much as 30 per cent to the category of agricultural labourers, 1,088 tenants and 184 rent-receivers. The total number of agricultural labourers is 1,67,425. The occupational distribution of families in villages surveyed by the General Village Survey of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry returns a higher percentage of the family of agricultural labourers, namely, 37.9 per cent, as would be found in the following table[1]:

TABLE 156

Occupation and Status	Number of families		Percentage of families to total No. of families	
Agricultural owners ..		170		44.0
Agricultural tenants ..		27		7.0
Agricultural workers :				
(a) With land ..	45	146	11.7	37.9
(b) Without land ..	101		26.2	
Total agricultural families ..		343		88.9
Total non-agricultural families		43		11.1
ALL FAMILIES ..		386		100.0

The General Family Survey of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry, which surveyed 8 sample villages with a total population of 1,829, found a much higher percentage of agricultural labourers, namely, 46.1 per cent. A notable feature of the State was found to be the caste composition of the surveyed population. As much as 40 per cent of the families of agricultural landowners belonged to scheduled castes and other backward classes, while the remainder were Brahmins, Kshatriyas, etc. Nearly 50 per cent of the agricultural workers' families belonged to the scheduled castes, while 34 per cent were drawn from Vaishyas, Kshatriyas and Brahmins.

Size Distribution Of Holdings

The size distribution of holdings as found by the Land Census conducted by the Land Reforms Division of the Planning Commission would be found in the following table :

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[1] Agricultural Wages in India, Vol. I, Op. cit., p. 301.

TABLE 157

Grade of holding	Area owned	
	No. of holdings	Area (acres)
Upto 1 acre	20,375	4,190
1.01 acres to 2.50 acres ..	5,986	10,779
2.51 „ to 5.0 „ ..	12,676	47,502
5.01 „ to 7.50 „ ..	12,692	79,228
7.51 „ to 10.0 „ ..	10,855	94,625
10.01 „ to 12.50 „ ..	9,081	1,01,788
12.51 „ to 15.0 „ ..	7,971	1,09,843
15.01 „ to 17.50 „ ..	6,423	1,03,963
17.51 „ to 20.00 „ ..	5,336	99,901
20.01 „ to 25.00 „ ..	7,655	1,70,993
25.01 „ to 30.00 „ ..	5,369	1,46,886
30.01 „ to 35.00 „ ..	4,033	1,30,461
35.01 „ to 40.00 „ ..	2,784	1,03,927
40.01 „ to 45.00 „ ..	2,033	86,437
45.01 „ to 50.00 „ ..	1,506	71,575
50.01 „ to 60.00 „ ..	2,253	1,22,752
60.01 „ to 75.00 „ ..	1,892	1,26,611
75.01 „ to 100.00 „ ..	1,584	1,36,550
100.01 „ to 150.00 „ ..	1,276	1,54,118
150.01 „ to 200.00 „ ..	505	86,417
200.01 „ to 300.00 „ ..	355	84,734
300.01 „ to 500.00 „ ..	204	75,271
500.01 „ to 1000.00 „ ..	74	49,345
More than 1000.00	24	57,185
Total ..	1,22,942	22,55,080

It follows that 39,037 holdings out of a total of 1,22,942 holdings, that is, about 30 per cent, were of 5 acres and less and they occupied a bare 62,471 acres out of a total holding area of 22,55,080 acres, that is, about 2.5 per cent of the total holding area. On the other hand, only 2,438 holdings were of 100 acres and above, out of which 74 were between 500—1,000 acres and 24 above 1,000 acres. And this infinitesimal percentage of the total number of holdings occupied as much as 4,97,070 acres, i.e., nearly a fifth of the total area of holdings. The maldistribution of land in the State would be apparent from the above.

Constitution Of Panchayats

Village Panchayats first came into existence in Bhopal State in the year 1947, when they were established by a *Farman* of the Nawab of Bhopal. Under this *Farman,* 572 Panchayats were established on the basis of one Village Panchayat for a village or group of villages having a population of 1,000 persons. These Panchayats had a limited scope. There was no adequate arrangement for their finances. The Panchayats were denied the power of taxation and, therefore, hardly any success worth the name was achieved by them. With the advent of a popular ministry in the State, the Bhopal State Panchayat Raj Bill was passed by the State Legislature and enforced on August 15, 1953, in 7 out of 14 tehsils of the State after receiving the President's assent. Till the middle of 1954, a total of 1,858 villages had been covered by the Village Panchayats in the seven tehsils where the elections were conducted.

Under the Act, Panchayats are formed on the basis of one Panchayat for one *Patwari* (revenue) circle and not on the basis of one Panchayat for every village. The average number of villages in a *Patwari* circle is 4 to 5. The Panchayats are formed on the basis of adult suffrage and joint electorate with reservation of seats for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes for the first election. The elections to the Panchayats are conducted in a general meeting of all voters by show of hands. A Panchayat area is divided into constituencies to enable every village to get its representation on it. The State Government has the power to nominate Patels, which are also elected offices, on the Panchayats, if it is considered necessary.

Compulsory Functions

Compulsory functions of the Panchayats are enumerated below :

(a) Construction, repairs, maintenance, cleaning and lighting of public streets;

(b) Medical relief;

(c) Sanitation and taking curative and preventive measures to remove and to stop the spread of an epidemic;

(d) Upkeep, protection and supervision of any buildings or other property which may belong to the Gaon Sabha or which may be transferred to it for management;

(e) Registration of births, deaths and marriages;

(f) Removal of encroachments on public streets, public places and property vested in the Gaon Sabha;

(g) Regulation of *melas,* markets and *hats* within its area except those managed by the State Government;

(h) Regulating places for the disposal of the dead bodies of human beings and animals and other offensive matter;

(i) Establishment of primary schools for boys and girls;

(j) Establishment, management and care of common grazing grounds and land for the common benefit of the persons residing within its jurisdiction;

(k) Construction, repair and maintenance of public wells, tanks and ponds for the supply of water for drinking, etc.;

(l) Regulating the construction of a new building or the extension or alteration of any existing building;

(m) Assisting the development of agriculture, commerce and industry;

(n) Rendering assistance in extinguishing fire and protecting life and property when fire occurs;

(o) The maintenance of such records relating to cattle census, population census and other statistics as may be prescribed;

(p) Maternity and child welfare;

(q) Allotment of places for storing manure;

(r) The promotion of co-operative farming;

(s) The relief of the destitute and the sick;

(t) Construction and maintenance of public latrines;

(u) Any other thing the expenditure on which is declared by the State Government to be an appropriate charge on the fund of Gaon Sabha;

(v) Any other measure of public utility calculated to promote the moral and material wellbeing or convenience of the villagers.

Discretionary Functions

The discretionary functions are as follows ;

(a) Planting and maintaining trees at the sides of public streets and in other public places;

(b) The improved breeding and medical treatment of cattle and prevention of disease in them;

(c) Filling in of insanitary depressions and levelling of land;

(d) Organising, subject to rules prescribed, a Village Volunteer Force for watch and ward, for assisting Gaon Panchayats and Nyaya Panchayats in the discharge of their functions and for the service of summons and notices issued by them;

(e) Assisting and advising agriculturists in obtaining Government loans and in the repayment thereof, in the liquidation of old debt and generally in the establishment of sound credit system according to law;

(f) Development of co-operation and establishment of improved seed and implement stores;

(g) Relief against famine or other calamities;

(h) Extension of the *abadi;*

(i) Establishment and maintenance of a library or reading room;

(j) Establishment and maintenance of an *akhara,* or a club, or any other place for recreation and games;

(k) Regulating the collection, removal and disposal of manure and sweepings;

(l) Prohibiting or regulating the curing, tanning and dyeing of skins within 220 yards of the *abadi;*

(m) Setting up organisations to promote goodwill and social harmony between different communities;

(n) Public radio sets and gramophones.

Sources Of Revenue

The taxes leviable by the Panchayats are of two kinds, compulsory and optional, and both are detailed below. The Government also give grants-in-aid to the Panchayats. The compulsory taxes are :

(a) A tax on land revenue payable under the provisions of the Bhopal State Land Revenue Act, 1931, not exceeding one anna in a rupee of such revenue, the tax aforesaid being payable by the person or persons severally or jointly cultivating such land;

(b) A tax on trade, calling and profession not exceeding such rate as may be prescribed;

(c) A tax on buildings owned by persons who do not pay any of the aforesaid taxes not exceeding such rate as may be prescribed;

(d) Fees on persons exposing goods for sale in any market or place belonging to or under the control of the Gaon Sabha or for the use of any building or structure therein;

(e) Fees on the registration of animals sold in any market or place belonging to or under the control of the Gaon Sabha;

The optional taxes are :

(a) A toll on vehicle, pack animals and porters bringing goods for sale within the area of the Gaon Sabha;

(b) A water rate where water is supplied by the Gaon Sabha;

(c) Fees for cleansing private latrines payable by the owners or occupiers of the houses to which the private latrines are attached where such cleansing is done by the Gaon Sabha agency;

(d) A tax payable by the owners of the animals kept within the Gaon Sabha area;

(e) A fee payable by the owners of vehicles where such vehicles are kept within the Gaon Sabha area;

(f) A lighting rate where the lighting of public streets, places and buildings is undertaken by the Gaon Sabha;

(g) A drainage fee where a system of drainage has been introduced by the Gaon Sabha;

(h) Any other tax, fee or rate approved by the State Government.

The Panchayats are required to spend their income on the improvement and development of villages after the presentation of the budget to the general body and its acceptance by it. Prior sanction of the prescribed authority is necessary before incurring the expenditure.

Control And Co-ordination

The President of the Panchayat is elected by the entire adult population of the Gaon Sabha and he is responsible for the day-to-day functions of the Panchayat. The State Government has directed that the village school teachers will work as Gaon Sabha secretaries for which they are paid a separate allowance. The District Officers and other officers of the Government have powers under the Act to exercise certain amount of authority on the Panchayats. At the State level, there is a Panchayat Raj Department to supervise and guide the Village Panchayats. The Department inspects the work of Panchayats and audits its account through its field staff. Section 99 of the Act authorises the State Government to supersede a Panchayat for dereliction of duty.

Judicial Aspect

The judicial work of the Bhopal Panchayat does not seem to have made any considerable headway. The original Act did provide for the constitution of a Nyaya Panchayat but when the Act was enforced, the clauses of the Act relating to Nyaya Panchayat were kept in abeyance. Under the Act, each district is divided into circles for the establishment of Nyaya Panchayats. Each Panchayat is required to send 5 representatives to the Circle Nyaya Panchayat. The Sarpanch of the Nyaya Panchayat is nominated by the District Officer on the recommendation of the Sub-Divisional Officers. A Nyaya Panchayat bench is constituted by 5 Panchayats. The Act authorises the Nyaya Panchayat to try certain civil suits and criminal cases. In civil suits, its jurisdiction is limited to Rs. 100, but the State Government can raise this limit to Rs. 500. It can also try minor criminal cases. No Nyaya Panchayat can award any imprisonment, but it can impose a fine up to a maximum of Rs. 50. Appeals against the decision of the Panchayat lie with the District Court. The appeal has to be filed within 30 days of the judgement.

CHAPTER XXXI

HIMACHAL PRADESH

According to the 1951 Census, Himachal Pradesh had a population of 9,83,367 in an area of 10,451 square miles, returning a density of 94 per square mile. Bilaspur was added to Himachal Pradesh territory more than a year ago. The population, area and density of the different districts in the State would be found in the following table : [1]

TABLE 158

District	Population	Area (Square miles)	Density
Mahasu ..	3,30,614	4,695	70
Mandi ..	3,10,626	1,527	203
Chamba ..	1,76,050	3,136	56
Sirmoor ..	1,66,077	1,094	152
Bilaspur ..	1,26,099	453	278

Density Of Population

The combined density of Himachal and Bilaspur comes to 102 persons per square mile. Himachal Pradesh, lying on the borders of Tibet, is rich in natural resources and forest wealth but is sparsely populated. The business of the State, which is in the most difficult terrain, suffers from lack of communications, and though potentially very rich, the State itself is yet undeveloped in its resources. The overwhelming population of the State is rural. In Mahasu, 95 per cent are agricultural and only 5 per cent non-agricultural; in Mandi, 92 per cent agricultural and 8 per cent non-agricultural. In Chamba again, 95 per cent are agricultural and 5 per cent non-agricultural; in Sirmoor, the corresponding figures are 89 per cent and 11 per cent, and in Bilaspur 91 per cent and 9 per cent. There are 22 tehsils in the State, out of which 6 tehsils with an area of 7,083 square miles (64 per cent) and a population of 2,81,802 persons (29 per cent) fall in the density group of under 100; 6 tehsils with an area of 1,683 square miles and a population of 2,06,659 persons fall in the second density group of 100–250 persons; 5 with an area of 1,471 square miles and a population of 2,58,849 in 150-200 group; 3 with an area of 432 square miles and a population of 95,317 in 200-300 group; and two with an area of 414 and a population of 14,074 are in 300-400 group. The tehsils with densities ranging under 300, cover 96 per cent area and 86 per cent population, while those of 300 and above 4 and 14 per cent, respectively.

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[1] Census of India, 1951, Vol. VIII, Part I-A-Report, Simla 1953, p. 5.

The Livelihood Pattern

The following table gives the livelihood pattern of the population in the State as revealed by the 1951 Census :

TABLE 159

Livelihood class	Population
Cultivators of land mainly owned and dependents ..	8,29,696
Cultivators of land mainly unowned and dependents	65,507
Cultivating labourers and dependents	9,098
Agricultural rent-receivers and dependents ..	9,937
All Agricultural Classes	9,14,238
All Non-agricultural classes	69,129
Total ..	9,83,367

It follows that Himachal Pradesh has a greater percentage of self-cultivated land than many other States of India. The percentage is 92 in Chamba, 89 in Mahasu and 84 in Mandi. In Sirmoor the percentage is 67. The tenants constitute 19 per cent in Sirmoor, 2 in Chamba, 5 in Mandi and 4 in Mahasu. The agricultural labourers are a bare ·37 per cent in Chamba, ·96 in Mahasu, 1 in Mandi and 1.32 in Sirmoor. The Livelihood Category IV, that is, agricultural rent-receivers, is even more insignificant than Class III. Except Mandi, where it is 2 per cent, it is ·5 per cent in Sirmoor, ·47 per cent in Mahasu and ·95 per cent in Chamba.

The General Village Survey of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry surveyed 12 villages in the State which were inhabited by 854 families and had a total population of 4,150. The occupational distribution of the population as given by this Survey would be found in Table 160[1] (p. 632).

The picture revealed is sharply different from what is given by the 1951 Census. As much as 12.1 per cent of the families were agricultural labourers, which is in sharp contrast with the figures given in Table 159 above.

Distribution Of Population In Villages

The State of Himachal Pradesh being hilly, the question of the formation of large hamlets does not arise, since cultivation is scattered. Actually a few homesteads situated near the lands form

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[1] Agricultural Wages in India ,Vol. I, Op. cit., p. 327.

TABLE 160

Occupation and status		Number of families		Percentage to total number of families
Agricultural owners		440		51.5
Agricultural tenants		148		17.3
Agricultural works :				
(a) Without land	58	103	6.8	12.1
(b) With land	45		5.3	
Total Agricultural families		691		80.9
Total non-agricultural families		163		19.1
ALL FAMILIES		854		100.0

a hamlet. A group of such hamlets forms the administrative unit in the rural areas and is known as *garh*. In Mandi, they are known as *suket*, and by some other names in other places. They hardly resemble a village in the plains. In Chamba district, there is a larger unit called *pargana,* and this comprises a group of hamlets. At the seat of *pargana,* a number of village officials reside and their duty is to help in the collection of land revenue and other Government dues. As much as 96 per cent of the population of Himachal Pradesh lives in rural areas, and only 41,401, i.e., a bare 4 per cent lives in urban areas. During the decades 1921-31, 1931-41 and 1941-51, the rural population has been on the increase, 7 per cent in the first decade, 11 per cent in the second decade and 3 per cent in the last decade. There are 7,456 villages in the State and 10 towns. The average population per village comes to 126. 65 per cent of the rural population lives in villages with a population of 500 and less, 18 per cent lives in villages with a population ranging from 500 to 2,000, 13 per cent in villages with a population from 2,000 to 5,000 and 4 per cent in villages with 5,000 and above population.

The Agricultural Classes

The general livelihood pattern of the agricultural population in the State would be apparent from the following figures of the livelihood pattern in Mahasu District. In this district, out of 1,000 persons of the general population, 946 fall within the agricultural Classes I to IV. 95 per cent of the population is agricultural, 2,94,232 in Class I, 13,820 in Class II, 3,162 in Class III, 1,547 in Class IV, making a total of 3,12,761 out of the total population of 3,30,614. It follows that 94 per cent of the agricultural classes are self-cultivators, 4 per cent tenants, 1 per cent agricultural labourers and .5 per cent rent-receivers. The reason for a very high percentage of Livelihood Category I lies in the fact that there is dearth of cultivable land in the State which causes the owner of land to cultivate it himself so that he and his family may get cereals for their subsistence, and grow crops like potato and other vegetables, which can bring them money income. The pattern indicated above for Mahasu district holds good more or less for the districts of Mandi, Sirmoor and Chamba.

Size Distribution Of Holdings

The Census of Landholdings conducted by the Land Reforms Division of the Planning Commission excluded holdings below 10 acres, and so the figures made available by this Census do not give any clear picture of the size distribution of landholdings in the State. The General Family Survey of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry, which surveyed 12 villages comprising 853 families and 4,201 population, gives the following picture of the size distribution of holdings :

TABLE 161 [1]

Size of holdings	No. of holdings	Area (acres)
Under 1 acre	74 (11.4)	37.25 (1.591)
1 acre and under 2.5 acres	235 (36.271)	373.3 (15.944)
2.5 „ „ 5 „	182 (28.04)	638.76 (27.282)
5 „ „ 7.5 „	89 (13.81)	523.4 (22.355)
7.5 „ „ 10 „	35 (5.39)	296.7 (12.672)
10 „ „ 25 „	33 (5.087)	446.9 (19.088)
25 „ „ 50 „	1 (.002)	25.0 (1.068)
50 acres and above	nil	nil
Total	649 (100.0)	2,341.31 (100.0)

Note : Figures in brackets denote percentages to total.

It follows that 309 holdings, constituting 47.6 per cent of the total, were under 2.5 acres and occupied 410.5 acres or 17.4 per cent of the total area of holdings. There was only one holding of above 25 acres.

Constitution Of Panchayats

Himachal Pradesh consists of 14,126 villages. Till 1954, the territorial jurisdiction of 280 Panchayats had been notified and this covered about 10,972 villages. Generally speaking, a Gram Sabha is established in Himachal Pradesh for a group of villages, in a *Patwar* circle. It may be noted that in the State a *Patwar* circle is formed by various considerations—area, population, *Khata* and *Khasra* numbers, etc. It is estimated that on an average, in the State of Himachal Pradesh, the Gram Sabha in the *Patwar* circle will generally have a population of 2,000 and a radius ranging between 2 to 6 miles.

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[1] Rural Man-Power and Occupational Structure, Op. cit., p. 369.

The Gram Panchayat is elected by all the adult members of the Gram Sabha by direct election. The tehsil and Zilla Panchayats, however, are indirectly elected. Every Gram Panchayat sends at least one representative to the Tehsil Panchayat. Similarly, every Tehsil Panchayat sends a representative to the Zilla Panchayat. At the same time, the Government has the power to nominate members to the Tehsil and Zilla Panchayats. It is, however, laid down that the percentage of the nominated members of the Tehsil Panchayat should not exceed 25 per cent of the total membership. Similarly, in the case of the Zilla Panchayat, the percentage of nominated members should not exceed 40 per cent of the total membership.

The elections of the Gram Panchayats are held constituency-wise, on the basis of one member for one constituency. There are certain reserved seats also in the Gram Panchayats, and for the purpose of the election of the reserved seats the whole Gram Sabha is treated as one constituency and the votes for the reserved seats are taken constituency-wise. There is no provision for nomination to the Gram Panchayat.

Panchayat Functions

The functions of the Gram Panchayat are enumerated below :

(1) Control of all public streets and waterways, except those belonging to individuals or controlled by the Government;

(2) Extension of *abadi*;

(3) Promotion of goodwill and social harmony between different communities of the village;

(4) Measures of public utility calculated to promote the moral and material wellbeing or convenience of the villagers;

(5) Village sanitation; the Gram Panchayats can direct the owner or occupier of any land or building to close, remove, alter, repair, cleanse or put in good order any latrine, urinal or water closet which opens on to a street or drain, and to clean and repair, etc., any private well or tank or reservoir which might be unhealthy for the village;

(6) Clearance of vegetation undergrowth and dirt, dung and other offensive matter;

(7) Control over erection or demolition of buildings.

The Panchayats can impose a fine of Rs. 100 in cases where a person disobeys orders issued to him for demolition of the house, etc. Apart from this, Panchayats are given the power to enquire and report about the misconduct of certain officials, such as peons, forest guards, vaccinators, police constables, process surveyors, bailiffs, *chowkidars* or *patwaris*. The Panchayats can also enter into a contract with a landowner for the realisation of his dues and taxes.

Nyaya Panchayats

The Nyaya Panchayats are formed in the State for a group of Gram Sabhas. Every Gram Sabha placed under the jurisdiction of the Nyaya Panchayat has to elect 10 persons as suitable for appointment as Panches of the Nyaya Panchayat. The Government selects any 5 out of the panel of 10 to constitute the Nyaya Panchayat. Till 1954, the Nyaya Panchayats had not started functioning in the State in a proper manner and so no opinion can be expressed on their utility or otherwise. In view of the illiteracy in the villages and the meagre resources of the Panchayats, the Government decided that the Head Master of school situated at the headquarter of the Nyaya Panchayat should work as secretary to the Nyaya Panchayat so far as its routine work was concerned. He, however, has no right to interfere in the judicial proceedings.

Sources Of Revenue

The sources of revenue of Panchayats are as follows :

(1) A local rate, which is realised at 20 per cent of the land revenue, is placed at the disposal of Tehsil Panchayats and is allotted to the different Gram Sabhas.

(2) Direct taxation of the Gram Sabhas. This included house tax, tax on the rent of the house, tax on the value of the produce of *khudkasht*, tax on the registration of marriages and births, tax on the construction of buildings, a tax on the transfer of movable properties. Apart from this, the Government gives grants-in-aid to Panchayats. The judicial fees and fines realised also constitute the source of revenue of the Panchayats.

The Government grants to the Panchayats are as follows :

(a) Grants for providing necessities in the initial stages, like minimum furniture, stationery, books;

(b) Grants equivalent to the amount earned by the Panchayats as judicial fees and fines;

(c) Grants for development activities allotted under the plan; and

(d) Grants for educational and social activities.

Every Gram Panchayat under the Act is required to prepare a budget which has to be approved by the District Panchayat Officer. The budget of Tehsil and Zilla Panchayat has to be approved by the Director of Panchayats.

Panchayat Staff : Control And Co-ordination

The President and the Vice-President of the Gram Sabhas are elected by the general electorate, whereas in the case of the Nyaya Panchayat, the Sarpanch is elected by the Panches. For the Tehsil Panchayat, the Tehsildar is the ex-officio chairman. In the case of Zilla Panchayat, the Deputy Commissioner is the ex-officio chairman. There is no provision for the appointment of any regular secretary to the Gram Panchayat. The village school teacher is supposed to work as ex-officio secretary for which he gets Rs. 10 as allowance. He is under the control of the Government but the Panchayats can complain against him. The Act no doubt provides for appointment of its staff by the Gram Panchayats after obtaining the approval of the prescribed authorities, but in view of the paucity of funds, hardly any appointments could be made. The activities of the Panchayats are co-ordinated through the machinery of the Zilla and Tehsil Panchayats, wherein all the officers at each level representing each department are nominated by the Government as members. The Tehsil and the Zilla Panchayats are directed by the Act to get advice and help of the constituent Gram Panchayats at every stage. At the State level, the Registrar of the Co-operative Societies is the ex-officio Director of the Panchayats with the Deputy Registrar as the ex-officio Deputy Director. For the districts, the District Co-operative Officer is the ex-officio District Panchayat Officer and so are the Inspectors and Sub-Inspectors of the Co-operative Department. The general pattern for auditing in respect of Panchayat work and expenditure is almost the same as laid down for co-operative societies. The Government has the power to dissolve the Panchayats for continuous failure to perform its duties or the abuse of its powers. In the event of such a dissolution, the Government can appoint a person or persons to perform the duties of the Panchayats.

Panchayat Elections: Future Prospects

Elections to Gram Panchayats in Mahasu, Chamba and Sirmoor districts were held from 25th to 30th September 1954, and in Mandi from 11th to 15th October. The election of Tehsil Panchayats was held in the latter half of 1955 for which the Gram Panchayats acted as electoral colleges. By June 1955, according to a report, 426 Gram Panchayats elected earlier had started functioning. The formation of Nyaya Panchayats was also completed in districts Sirmoor, Mahasu and Chamba.

The Panchayat idea has caught the imagination of the people of Himachal Pradesh and the State Government has taken keen interest in its development. In December 1955, the State's Home Minister, Shri Padam Dev, moved the Himachal Pradesh Panchayat Raj Amendment Bill to make provision for getting unskilled labour free of cost for a public purpose, including developmental works, so that development in rural areas may make good progress.

Speaking at a Panchayat *Mela* held at Bhanath, Pajhota, Sirmoor district, on June 15, 1956, the State's Chief Minister Dr. Y. S. Parmar said : "Panchayats today are in a formative stage and they would play a definite role in the future set-up and development programme of Himachal Pradesh." He said that the Panchayats would undertake the management of schools, sanitation and development works of their respective areas. The Second Five-Year Plan would be really a people's Plan, inasmuch as its foundation was to be laid by the people through Panchayats.

In the Second Five-Year Plan of the State, Dr. Parmar said, Rs. 50 lakhs had been provided for Panchayats. Besides other schemes of public welfare, they would open 100 Ayurvedic dispensaries in the rural areas of the Pradesh under this Plan. Panchayats, he added, would be given 50 per cent subsidy for the construction of Panchayat Ghars. Approximately a Panchayat Ghar would cost Rs. 10,000. Panchayats would shortly be given radio sets for providing radio listening facilities to the rural population of their areas. Libraries were also being provided to the Panchayats.

In January 1956, the State Government announced a cash prize of Rs. 10,000 to be given to the Gram Panchayat which is found to have done the maximum development work during September-November period of 1955. The selection will take into consideration construction of village roads, irrigation channels, Panchayat Ghar, clubs and *akharas,* tree plantation and sanitation. Besides, prizes of Rs. 5,000 were announced for the best Panchayats in each district.

Prizes of Rs. 300, Rs. 100 and Rs. 50 were also announced for the first, second and third best Panchayats in a tehsil. The third prize can be given to 25 per cent of Panchayats in a tehsil.

The revised Second Plan of Himachal Pradesh for Panchayats envisages an expenditure of about Rs. 72 lakhs out of which the

Government will contribute over Rs. 48 lakhs. The balance will be raised through public contributions, mainly in the form of voluntary labour and donation of land for Panchayat farms.

During the First Plan period, Rs. 4.3 lakhs were given to the State's Panchayat Department.

Himachal Pradesh had 466 Gram Panchayats by the end of the First Plan period. Three hundred Panchayat Ghars are to be built at a cost of about Rs. 21,75,000. The State Government hopes to setup 26 Tehsil Panchayats and five District Panchayats, besides Judicial Panchayats. Indirect employment to 23,721 people is expected to be given by the Panchayats.

CHAPTER XXXII

VINDHYA PRADESH

VINDHYA Pradesh, the land of the brave Baghelas and Bundelas, where some of the most glorious chapters of Rajput bravery have been written, has come into its own after more than two centuries of degradation under feudal rule propped up by the foreign power. Vindhya Pradesh has been one of the earliest abodes of mankind, which is revealed by the ruddle of Hamatite drawings discovered in the caves of the rock shelters of the Kaimur and Vindhyan hills. Pigmy flints of Neolithic ages in large number were discovered by Mr. A. C. Carlleyle in 1867-68 A.D. The Vindhya Hills had their own importance in the epic period and Shri Ramachandra halted at Chitrakut, a sacred place in the State, after leaving Ayodhya when he was exiled. As a matter of fact, this Pradesh is full of historical anecdotes which are not yet fully known and can be the subject of interesting historical research.

Till April 1948, Vindhya Pradesh was known as the Eastern part of Central India States Agency. Now it is the biggest Part 'C' State of India. It spreads over the area that lies between Uttar Pradesh in the north and east, and Madhya Pradesh in the south. On the west lie Madhya Bharat and some parts of Uttar Pradesh.

Area, Population, Density

The State was formed in April 1948 by the union of 34 states of Bundelkhand and Baghelkhand Political Agencies of Central India and one state of Gwalior Presidency. The biggest of the merged states was Rewa with an area of 12,830 square miles and a population of 18,20,445, according to the 1941 Census[1]. The total population of this territory in the 1941 Census was 35,69,455. In 1950, some enclaves were transferred from Vindhya Pradesh to Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Madhya Bharat and some enclaves of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh were transferred to Vindhya Pradesh. As a result, the final area of the State as recorded by the 1951 Census is 23,603 square miles. The State is divided into Baghelkhand and Bundelkhand divisions. The Baghelkhand districts are Rewa (area 2,513 square miles), Sidhi (4,071 square miles), Sahdol (5,419 square miles) and Satna (2,739 square miles). The Bundelkhand districts are Datia (733 square miles), Tikamgarh (1,948 square miles), Chhatarpur (3,388 square miles) and Panna (3,788 square miles).

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[1] Among the merged states, 12 belonged to Baghelkhand Political Agency and 22 to Bundelkhand Political Agency. With all these states the British Government is supposed to have entered into treaties. The ludicrousness of these 'rulers' with whom the British signed treaties will be apparent from the fact that amongst the states there was one called Banka-Pahari with an area of 5 square miles, and another Bijna with an area of 7 square miles, and one called Naigwan Rewai of 12 square miles. These 'rulers' maintained all the regalia possible under their rule and one of them, Tori-Fatehpur to wit, with an area of 27 square miles, maintained a regular prison which had some huge *Ballis* to which the unfortunate prisoner was tied by an iron chain

The total population of Vindhya Pradesh according to the 1951 Census was 35,74,690. The density per square mile in Vindhya Pradesh in 1951 was 151 as compared to 143 persons per square mile in 1941 and 115 in 1921. Increase in the total population of Vindhya Pradesh during the last 50 years is 87,143 persons. In 1901, the total population was 26,95,457 persons. Thus, during 50 years the population has increased by 32.61 per cent.

Agricultural Classes In The Total Population

Of the total population of 35,74,690 according to the 1951 Census, 31,14,364 or 87.12 per cent depended for their livelihood on agriculture. Of the total population, 22,38,203 persons or 62.61 per cent were tenants cultivating wholly or mainly owned land, 2,27,395 persons or 6.36 per cent of the total population were cultivators of land mainly unowned, 6,29,813 persons or 17.62 per cent were agricultural labourers and their dependents, and 18,953 persons or .53 per cent of the total population were non-cultivating rent-receivers. Expressed in terms of per ten-thousand of the general population, 6,261 belonged to Livelihood Class I, 636 to Livelihood Class II, 1,762 to Livelihood Class III and 53 to Livelihood Class IV. See the following table[1] which gives number of agricultural classes per 10,000 of general population in the districts of Vindhya Pradesh :

TABLE 162

Natural Division and District		Category I	Category II	Category III	Category IV
VINDHYA PRADESH	..	6,261	636	1,762	53
Bundelkhand Division	..	6,688	386	1,264	85
Datia	..	6,472	560	676	95
Tikamgarh	..	7,429	377	985	50
Chhatarpur	..	6,372	356	1,416	108
Panna	..	6,367	341	1,751	86
Baghelkhand Division	..	6,026	774	2,036	35
Satna	..	5,640	477	2,092	63
Rewa	..	5,301	1,063	2,448	22
Sidhi	..	6,210	1,215	2,151	34
Shahdol	..	6,930	432	1,506	25

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[1] Census of India, 1951, Vol. XVI. Vindhya Pradesh, Part I-Report and Subsidiary Tables, by N. K. Dube; Lucknow, 1953; p. 201.

Distribution Of Population In Villages Of Different Sizes

In Vindhya Pradesh a revenue village was taken to be the village for census purpose. Throughout Vindhya Pradesh regular revenue survey and settlements have taken place and village maps exist for every village. A rural village in Vindhya Pradesh is a congregation of houses originally set up by one, two or more families coming from some other over-growing village with a view to bringing under cultivation the surrounding land after clearing the forests and embanking the depressions. The majority of villages in Baghelkhand division are small and devoid of the various village craftsmen, like carpenters, potters, etc., who generally are the inevitable habitants of villages in North India. As against this, there are also larger and older villages coming down from several generations. The distribution of population in villages of different sizes in Vindhya Pradesh and its districts would be found in the following table[1]:

TABLE 163

Natural Division and District	population per village	No. in village per 1,000 of general Population	No. per 1,000 rural population in villages with a population of			
			5,000 and above	2,000 to 5,000	500 to 2,000	Under 500
VINDHYA PRADESH ..	229	914	2	44	435	519
Bundelkhand Division ..	239	898	..	64	482	455
Datia	310	770	..	45	454	501
Tikamgarh	409	945	..	93	514	393
Chhatarpur	383	898	..	71	532	397
Panna	241	915	..	19	356	625
Baghelkhand Division	281	923	3	38	411	553
Satna	285	890	..	48	424	528
Rewa	270	904	..	50	411	539
Sidhi	268	1,000	..	24	391	585
Shahdol	302	916	10	10	416	564

Thus, the population per village works out to 229. In Bundelkhand division the average is 239 and in Baghelkhand 281. Tikamgarh district has an average population of 409 per village and then comes district Chhatarpur with 383 persons per village. The lowest average per village is in Panna (241), followed by Sidhi (268) and Rewa (270). The reason may be attributed to difficulties of digging wells in these places, where water is available at 50 to 60 feet below ground in some places. Number per 1,000 of general population living in villages of less than 500 people is the highest in Panna district, being 625, and then come Sidhi and Shahdol with 585 and 563, respectively. The number is lowest in Tikamgarh, being 392 only. The same explanation given above holds good here as well.

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[1] Ibid, p. 202.

Livelihood Classes In The Rural Population

The rural population of the State has increased from 30,96,788 in 1941 to 32,68,780 in 1951, that is, by 6 per cent as compared to an increase of 13 per cent in 1931-41 decade. Total number of villages in Vindhya Pradesh in 1941 was 10,733 and by 1951 it increased by 1.78 per cent, reaching a total of 10,924. The number of villages during the last 50 years has increased by 6.95 per cent, from 10,214 in 1901 to 10,924 in 1951. Density of rural population in Vindhya Pradesh is 140 persons per square mile as compared to 151 for the general population. Rewa district has the highest rural density with 232 persons per square mile, followed by Tikamgarh (179), Chhatarpur (130), Sidhi (114), Shahdol (111). Panna with 87 persons per square mile has the lowest rural density. The distribution of rural population in Vindhya Pradesh districts among the agricultural classes would be found in the following table[1]:

TABLE 164

	Livelihood Classes			
	I	**II**	**III**	**IV**
VINDHYA PRADESH ..	21,79,097	2,19,132	6,10,166	17,542
Bundelkhand	8,27,032	46,315	1,53,728	9,963
Datia	97,647	8,590	10,088	1,187
Tikamgarh	2,67,846	13,515	35,003	1,661
Chhatarpur	2,99,714	15,739	64,688	5,013
Panna	1,61,825	8,471	43,949	2,102
Baghelkhand	13,52,035	1,72,820	4,56,438	7,579
Satna	3,03,158	25,337	1,12,644	3,251
Rewa	3,25,312	64,057	1,50,979	1,241
Sidhi	2,88,319	56,388	99,876	1,594
Shahdol	4,35,246	27,038	92,939	1,493

Total rural population in Livelihood Class I in Vindhya Pradesh is 21,79,067, in Class II it is 2,19,135 and in Class III 6,10,166. Table 165[2] (p. 643) gives the different livelihood classes in the State per 10,000 of the rural population.

Thus, out of every 10,000 persons in rural areas of Vindhya Pradesh, 9,251 or 92.51 per cent depend on agricultural occupations. The cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned and their dependents are not numerous, being 6,666 out of every 10,000. Next come the agricultural labourers, being 1,866 in every 10,000 population

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[1] Ibid, p. 49.

[2] Ibid, p. 206.

TABLE 165

Natural Division and District	Per 10,000 rural population belonging to Livelihood Class			
	I	II	III	IV
VINDHYA PRADESH	6,666	670	1,867	54
Bundelkhand Division	7,248	406	1,347	87
Datia	7,714	679	797	94
Tikamgarh	7,743	391	1,012	48
Chhatarpur	6,938	364	1,498	116
Panna	6,839	358	1,858	89
Baghelkhand Division	6,355	812	2,145	36
Satna	6,134	513	2,298	66
Rewa	5,678	1,118	2,635	22
Sidhi	6,210	1,214	2,151	34
Shahdol	7,300	454	1,559	25

Livelihood Classes In The Agricultural Population

The total number of persons depending on agricultural occupations in Vindhya Pradesh is 31,14,364 or 87.17 per cent of the total general population. Again, of the total rural population of 32,68,780, as many as 30,25,910 persons or 93 per cent depend on agricultural occupations. Of this total population engaged in agriculture, 72 per cent belong to Category I, 7 per cent to Category II, 20 per cent to Category III, and .6 per cent to Category IV. The following table[1] gives agricultural classes per 1,000 persons of general population and number of each class per 10,000 persons of all agricultural classes :

TABLE 166

Natural Division and District	Agricultural classes per 1,000 persons of General Population	No. per 10,000 persons in all agricultural classes			
		I	II	III	IV
VINDHYA PRADESH	871	7.187	730	2.022	61
Bundelkhand Division	842	7.940	458	1,501	101
Datia	780	8,295	717	866	122
Tikamgarh	884	8.403	427	1,114	56
Chhatarpur	825	7,720	432	1,717	131
Panna	855	7,451	400	2,049	100
Baghelkhand Division	887	6,792	873	2,295	40
Satna	827	6.818	577	2.529	76
Rewa	883	6,000	1.203	2,771	25
Sidhi	961	6,462	1,264	2.238	36
Shahdol	889	7,793	486	1,693	28

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[1] Ibid, p 213.

The General Village Survey of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry, which surveyed 14 villages with a total of 1,390 families and population 6,868, gives the following occupational distribution of families :

TABLE 167 [1]

Occupation and Status		Number of families		Percentage to total No. of families
Total agricultural owners		776		55.8
Total agricultural tenants		67		4.8
Agricultural workers :				
(a) Without land	233	280	16.8	20.2
(b) With land	47		3.4	
Total Agricultural Families		1,123		80.8
Total Non-Agricultural Families		267		19.2
All Families		1,390		100.0

Caste Composition

The percentage of families of agricultural labourers was found to be 20.2 per cent. The General Family Survey gives the following picture of caste composition of the surveyed villages. Of the 755 families owning land, 157 belonged to scheduled castes and tribes and 123 to backward classes, as against 241 Kshatriyas, 106 Brahmins, 87 Vaishyas and 41 families belonging to other classes. Says the Survey : "Though a number of families in the villages belonged to the scheduled castes and backward classes, the land was vested largely in the hands of Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas; only 38 per cent of the families belonging to the scheduled and backward classes were owners as against 84, 89 and 49 per cent of the Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaishya families." And further : "Workers, both agricultural and non-agricultural, were mostly drawn from the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and backward classes, only 10 per cent of the agricultural and 18 per cent of the non-agricultural workers' families belonging to the other castes." [2]

Agricultural Holdings

Now let us view the size distribution of holdings in Vindhya Pradesh. The Vindhya Pradesh Census Report says that no figures about holdings are available with the State's Revenue Department.

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[1] Agricultural Wages in India, Vol. I, Op. cit., 355.

[2] Rural Man-Power and Occupational Structure, Op. cit., pp. 407-408.

The Land Census conducted by the Land Reforms Division of the Planning Commission was confined to holdings of 7.5 acres and above and so is useless for any evaluation of the holdings position. The General Family Survey, here as elsewhere, comes to our rescue and helps us in having an idea of the size distribution of holdings in the State. See the following table[1]:

TABLE 168

Size of holdings	Number of holdings	Area (Acres)
Under 1 acre	59 (6.73)	33.15 (0.41)
1 acre and under 2.5 acres	154 (17.58)	254.63 (3.18)
2.5 acres „ 5 „	194 (22.15)	722.41 (9.02)
5 „ „ 7.5 „	145 (16.55)	895.51 (11.19)
7.5 „ „ 10 „	93 (10.62)	798.16 (9.98)
10 „ „ 25 „	177 (20.21)	2,755.40 (34.42)
25 „ „ 50 „	36 (4.11)	1,261.12 (15.75)
50 „ „ 100 „	15 (1.71)	925.81 (11.56)
100 acres and above	3 (0.34)	359.73 (4.49)
Total	876 (100.0)	8,005.92 (100.0)
Average size of holding		9.1

Note :—Figures in brackets denote percentages to total.

It follows that 59 holdings, being 6.73 per cent of the total number, were less than 1 acre and occupied 33.15 acres, or a bare 0.14 per cent of the total area of holdings. 213 holdings, being 24.31 per cent of the total number, were less than 2.5 acres and occupied 287.78 acres, that is, a bare 3.59 per cent of the total holding area. Further, 407 holdings, being 46.46 per cent of the total number of holdings, were less than 5 acres and occupied 1,010.49 acres, or a bare 12.61 per cent of the total holding area. Only 3 holdings were of 100 acres and above, but these 0.34 per cent of the total number of holdings occupied 359.73 acres, that is as much as 4.49 of the total area of holdings.

Constitution Of Panchayats

A popular Government was installed in the State for the first time in March 1952. A Vindhya Pradesh Gram Panchayat Ordinance was issued in 1949 and Panchayats have been organised under that Ordinance.

The pattern of Panchayat organisation is very much similar to what obtains in the neighbouring State of Uttar Pradesh. Gram

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[1] Ibid, p. 415.

Panchayats are established in every *patwari* circle. A *patwari* circle may have a single village or may be a combination of a few small villages, and they form the Gram Sabha area. The *patwari* circle is not split up, that is, a village of one *patwari* circle is not combined with Gram Sabha of another *patwari* circle. Panchayats are formed on the basis of adult suffrage. All the adult males and females above the age of 21 elect the Panches by show of hands at a general meeting for a period of three years. The number of Panches varies from 5 to 15 and is regulated by the population of the village. There is no provision for nomination of members. The Sarpanch is also elected by the entire electorate.

Panchayat Functions

The Gram Sabha functions like the chief legislative body of the village and is the final authority for all purposes. The Panchayat is the chief executive body responsible to Gram Sabha. It is responsible for efficient administration of the village and its main aim is to raise the moral, spiritual, social, economic and political standards of the people living in that area. The Village Panchayats have been entrusted with a very large number of functions. The obligatory functions include: construction, repair and maintenance of public streets; medical relief; sanitation; taking curative and preventive measures against epidemics; registration of deaths, births and marriages; disposal of dead bodies; establishment and maintenance of primary schools; construction, repair and maintenance of public wells and tanks; supply of water for drinking; assistance in development of agriculture, commerce and industry; rendering assistance in extinguishing fires; providing maternity and child welfare facilities and allotting places for storing manure.

The discretionary functions are: planting trees; improving breeds of cattle; filling insanitary depressions; organising a Village Volunteer Corps for watch and ward; establishment and development of co-operative societies; assisting and advising agriculturists in obtaining loans and distribution of improved varieties of seeds and implements, etc.; giving famine relief; promotion of village sports; establishment and maintenance of reading rooms; and undertaking any other work of public utility.

The list is, indeed, exhaustive. The educational, public health and other like activities of Panchayats are co-ordinated with corresponding departments of the Government. With the abolition of zamindari in Vindhya Pradesh, Panchayats have come to assume more responsibilities. Panchayats can enter into contract with the Government and collect taxes and rents on behalf of the State The costs of the Village Volunteer Force are to be paid from the Panchayat revenues

Judicial Aspect

On the judicial side, the Nyaya Panchayat has within its circle nearly 3 to 5 Gram Sabhas, each Sabha electing 5 Panches to form a panel of 20 to 25 people for the trial of small civil, criminal and revenue cases. The term of office is 3 years. Nyaya Panchayats have been conferred only limited powers. In civil suits, the value of money is limited to Rs. 100. They can also try cases for offences under I.P.C., viz., Secs. 140, 160, 179, 277, 279, 334, 352, 356, 403, 411, 426, etc., and cases under the Cattle Trespass Act. Panchayats have to perform police duties and can demand security from a man if any breach of peace is feared on his part. All revenue proceedings of the Panchayats can be revised, and a Panchayat cannot alter its judgement once it is passed. No Nyaya Panchayat can award imprisonment. No legal practitioner can appear in Panchayat court. According to the report of 1954, about 12,082 cases were instituted before Panchayat courts out of which 10,171 were settled. Nearly Rs. 13,131 were collected from imposition of fines and penalties. Thus, Nyaya Panchayats have resulted in quick dispensation of justice.

Financial Aspect

Each village has a Panchayat Fund. All sums received in taxes, fees, fines, grants and donations are credited to this Fund. All sums received as rents from public property vested in Panchayats and receipts from the disposal of dirt, dung or refuse, etc., are also credited to this Fund. Each Panchayat can levy tax on rent payable under tenancy code; a tax on rent received by *Khewatdar* on account of land; a tax upon assumed rental value of *sir* and *khudkast* calculated in accordance with Land Revenue Code; a tax on trade, calling or profession (weighman Rs. 3, merchants Rs. 8 per year); a tax on buildings owned by persons who do not pay any of the above taxes and a tax of Rs. 3 per year from owners plying vehicles on hire. Panchayats can also levy tax on business people earning Rs. 600 a year at the rate of not exceeding nine pies a rupee, and half anna per rupee between incomes of Rs. 600 and Rs. 1,200 a year. The Government granted Rs. 300 in 1952 and Rs. 120 in 1952-53 for each Panchayat. Total grant amounted to Rs. 70,020 in 1952-53 and Rs. 39,500 in 1953-54. Panchayats can also borrow money from State Government. To make sources of revenue more effective and real, Vindhya Pradesh Government has a plan to transfer a part of land revenue to these Panchayats.

In the year 1953, the Government provided a sum of Rs. 1,01,420, in the State budget for Panchayat administration. In

1954, a sum of Rs. 2,00,000 was sanctioned. As the Panchayat revenue is meagre, they can also raise loans to meet the expenses.

A Panchayat is authorised under the Gram Panchayat Ordinance to utilise the Gram Panchayat Fund subject to the provision of the budget to meet charges in connection with its duties under the Ordinance. The budget is subject to the sanction of the prescribed authority. Government's previous sanction (besides the approval of the prescribed authority), is not required for any item.

Control and Supervision

As already stated, President is elected by the whole electorate. There is a Panchayat secretary to assist the Panchayat. He is appointed with the approval of the prescribed authority out of the panel of names submitted by the Panchayat. The appointment, conditions of service, rules of discipline, etc., are provided in the Rules in Chapter IX of the Rules made under the Vindhya Pradesh Gram Panchayat Ordinance, 1949. He is under the discipline of the Panchayat. Only fine and dismissal cases are subject to the approval of the prescribed authority. Further, the Panchayats are permitted under the Ordinance to engage such staff as is necessary and as approved by the prescribed authority.

The Government exercises control under Sections 95 and 96 of the Gram Panchayat Ordinance, 1949. Under Section 95 of the Act, the Government can inspect any work of Panchayats, can order them to furnish any statement and record and can dissolve any Panchayat. The village officers may also be dismissed for failure to perform the duties imposed on them by the Ordinance. The education, public health and other activities of the Panchayat are coordinated with the corresponding departments of the Government through the Gram Panchayat Officer, Gram Panchayat Inspector and the Secretaries. The Deputy Commissioner and the Additional Deputy Commissioner who exercise authority over the Panchayats frequently consult the Gram Panchayats, specially during their tours, in the matter of their improvement, co-ordination with the officers of the Education and Public Health Departments, etc.

There is no separate Panchayat Department of the Government. It is a section of the combined Department of Local Bodies and Co-operative Societies. The Director of Food and Civil Supplies is also the Director of Panchayats and Co-operatives. The Department does not possess and exercise powers of superseding the Panchayats.

Work Of Vindhya Panchayats

The Administration Report of the Government of Vindhya Pradesh for 1953 has the following to say on Panchayats in the

State: "The organisation of Gram Panchayats and Nyaya Panchayats not included in Vindhya Pradesh Five-Year Plan is being brought in the Plan. The Plan is to have a Gram Panchayat in every *Patwari* Circle by the end of the period of Five-Year Plan. 546 Gram Panchayats were opened during the year. By now, there are 606 Gram Panchayats which cover practically one third area of the Pradesh. Besides Gram Panchayats, there is one Nyaya Panchayat exercising jurisdiction over 3 to 5 Gram Panchayats. Thus there are 207 Nyaya Panchayats. 200 Secretaries have been appointed to assist the working of the Panchayats. Two ladies were elected, one in Sidhi district and the other in Chhatarpur district, as office-bearers of Gram Panchayats."

A scheme was initiated about this time for harnessing manpower in rural areas for development work. Under this scheme, the village people contribute one-third either in cash, kind or labour *(Shramadan)* and two-third is contributed by Government and Lt. Governor's Welfare Fund in equal parts. Village Panchayats also lend active support to Bhoodan Movement of Acharya Vinoba for redistribution of land to landless tillers of the soil. The Panchayats participate in all nation-building programmes, like Community Project, Literacy Campaign, Grow-More-Food Campaign, *Vana Mahotsava* and *Shramadan,* etc.

The Panchayats in Vindhya Pradesh seem to have caught the imagination of the rural masses, and though defects may be numerous, their work on the whole is commendable. By 1954, as many as 4,032 villages were covered by the Panchayats. In 1955, a few hundred more Village Panchayats began to function and the total number of Panchayats in the State in October 1955 was 1,800. According to the Administration Report of 1954, 21 miles of village roads were constructed by the Panchayats and 57 miles of roads were repaired. As many as 103 Gandhi *Chabutras,* 57 wells, 8 Panchayat Ghars, 8 *Vyayamshalas,* 9 *Pathshalas* and 17 libraries were also constructed and started by the Panchayats.

Conclusion

Two Hindi weeklies from Vindhya Pradesh, namely, *Bhaskar* and *Vindhya Panchayat,* published from the State Capital, Rewa, carry detailed reports every week of Panchayat activities in the State. These reports make interesting reading. They reveal considerable Panchayat activity in different districts of the State, and sometimes give inspiring reports of most useful work done by individual Panchayats. We regret that we cannot go into a description of them here. These reports at the same time reveal the darker side of the picture, namely, the conflicts which now and then raise their heads in the Panchayats, the high-handedness of

TABULAR REPRESENTATION XIII

No. of villages and Panchayats, etc	Legislation passed	Amendment	Village Panchayats	
			How constituted	Powers in Village managements
Total No. of Villages : 10,924 No. of Panchayats : 1,800 Villages covered : 4,532	Gram Panchayts Ordinance, 1948.	Nil	Election based on Adult suffrage. Number of Panches varies between 5 to 15, regulated on population basis. Elected for 3 years. A Gram Sabha may be formed for a village or a group of villages. President elected by the whole electorate. It is a section of the combined Dept. of Local Bodies and Co-operative Societies.	Public health, sanitation, upkeep of wells, assisting people in getting financial help, maintenance and improvement of schools, hospitals, roads, etc. Can collect taxes on entering into contract with the Government. Provision for levying taxes. Provision for organising Village Volunteer Corps for local security. Cost to be met from Panchayat Revenues.

PANCHAYAT INSTITUTION IN VINDHYA PRADESH

Sources of Revenue of Panchayats	Nyaya Panchayats		Report on the Working of Panchayats		Remarks
	How constituted	Powers	Gram	Nyaya	
Govt. grants; taxes levied, e.g., a tax on the rent payable under the Tenancy Code; on trade, callings and professions; Fines, loans and gifts. A Gram Fund to be created out of the collections. Govt. sanctioned Rs. 300 (1952) and Rs. 120 (1953) per Panchayat.	3 to 5 Gram Sabhas may be combined for forming one Nyaya Panchayat. Fees can be charged in civil suits. Every Gram Sabha elects 5 people to act as Panches in Nyaya Panchayat. Sarpanch elected by these people. Term of office is 3 years.	Can try civil cases. Certain sections of the I.P.C. as applied in Vindhya Pradesh can also be tried by Panchayats. The value of money involved in such cases is limited to Rs. 50. Other offences made cognizable by Panchayats may be tried. Police duties, security can be demanded by Panchayat in case of any apprehension. No imprisonment can be awarded. Some persons cannot be tried. Total value of a suit should not exceed Rs. 100. All revenue proceedings can be revised. Panchayats cannot alter their judgement. No legal practitioner allowed. May frame bye-laws for village welfare works.	Improvement in education, sanitation, public health, development of co-operative movement.	Quick-dispensation of justice.	Generally working satisfactorily. Administration likely to improve as more educated people come there.

certain Panchayat officials, the callousness and indifference of authorities, etc. From these reports, however, the virility of the State Panchayats and of its rural masses is easily revealed. It would appear that better coordination and guidance at the State level is called for. Probably next to nothing has been done for training of the Panches. The whole position needs to be reviewed and a fresh legislation would seem essential. The Vindhya Pradesh Panchayats, nevertheless, have a very bright future.

CHAPTER XXXIII

JAMMU AND KASHMIR

CONSTITUTING the extreme western section of the lofty Himalayas, the State of Jammu and Kashmir is well-known for its scenic beauty and grandeur. With a temperate climate and abounding in mountains and forests and hills and valleys, it has been likened to a house with many storeys. Along the Punjab frontier is a stretch of level land bordered by a sparsely wooded, broken and irregular low hilly country. To reach the first storey, a range of mountains, 8,000 feet high, has to be crossed. This area of beautiful uplands is drained by the deep gorge of the river Chenab, has oak, rhododendron and chestnut forests on the lower reaches, and *deodar* and pine forests on the upper. The steps of the Himalayan range, known as the Pir Panjal, lead to the second storey, on which rests the beautiful Kashmir Valley drained by the river Jhelum. Still higher are Astor and Baltistan and Ladakh. In the back premises, far away to the north-west, lies Gilgit, west and north of the Indus, the whole area shadowed by a wall of joint mountains which run east from the Kilik or Mintake passes of the Hindu Kush leading to the Pamirs along the Muztagarh range to the Karakoram range which merges in the Kuenlum mountains.

Area And Population

The State has an area of 92,780 square miles. According to the 1941 Census, the State had a total population of 40,21,616, of which 11.1 per cent, living in towns of population of 5,000 and above, was urban and the rest rural. The estimated population in 1951 was 44,10,000, having increased by about 10 per cent during the previous decade. The total number of villages in 1941 was 8,740. This includes the number of villages across the Cease-Fire Line. In 1951, it was estimated at 6,651, excluding the Frontier *ilaqa*. The average population per village in 1941 was 412.7. The proportion of rural to urban population in 1951 was 89 to 11.

Occupational Structure

No regular census having been undertaken in the State in 1951 on account of specific local circumstances, we have to rely upon the Agricultural Labour Surveys entirely for our information regarding the village pattern in the State. The General Village Survey conducted its enquiries in 16 villages of the State in the two zones in which the State was divided, namely, Jammu and Kashmir. Twelve villages or 75 per cent of the total had each a population of less than 801, and 10 villages or 62.5 per cent of the total had each an area of less than 501 acres. The average population per village was 605 and the average area 1,025 acres. The density per square mile was 378. The occupational classification of the families surveyed is given in the following table :[1]

TABLE 169

Occupation and Status		No. of families		Percentage to total number of families
Agricultural owners ..		1,132		74.6
Agricultural tenants		181		11.9
Agricultural workers :				
(a) With land ..	20	20	1.3	1.3
(b) Without land ..	Nil		Nil	
Total agricultural families ..		1,333		87.8
Non-agricultural labourers ..		22		1.5
Artisans		44		2.9
Traders		15		1.0
Others		103		6.8
Total Non-agricultural families ..		184		12.2
All Families		1,517		100.0

Thus, agricultural workers formed a very low percentage of the total of 1,517 families; the number of families of agricultural workers was 20 or 1.3 per cent; all of them owned land.

The General Family Survey also likewise selected 16 villages with 1,543 families with a population of 9,219. The average number of persons per family was 5.97 for the villages as a whole, the figures for Jammu and Kashmir being 6.35 and 5.92, respectively. As much as 87.0 per cent of the families were agricultural. Of the 1,543 families, 1,075 or 80 per cent were landowners, 216 or 16.1 per cent tenants, and only 52 or 3.9 per cent agricultural workers. In Jammu there was no family of agricultural workers. There were 200 non-agricultural families.

Of the 1,543 families, 17 landholders' families were Kshatriyas, and 3 tenants' families were from scheduled castes and tribes; the remaining families belonged to other miscellaneous castes and sub-castes, which could not be included in any recognised caste classification. The bulk of agricultural workers' families came from *Rathars, Dass, Mirs, Ganais, Jats, Butts, Chohons, Kataries, Mullas, Kotyas, Maliks, Wagays, Kakas, Dooms, Wards* and *Gojirs*.[2]

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[1] Agricultural Wages in India, Vol. I., Op. Cit. p. 211.

[2] Rural Man-Power and Occupational Structure, Op. cit., p. 211.

Agricultural Holdings

The following table gives the size distribution of holdings :

TABLE 170

Size of holdings	No. of holdings	Area (acres)
Under 1 acre	189 (13.7)	96.96 (1.8)
1 acre and under 2.5 acres	419 (30.3)	696.60 (13.4)
2.5 acres ,, 5 ,,	426 (30.8)	1,554.00 (29.8)
5 ,, ,, 7.5 ,,	195 (14.1)	1,181.77 (22.7)
7.5 ,, ,, 10 ,,	86 (6.2)	718.93 (13.7)
10 ,, ,, 25 ,,	63 (4.6)	853.84 (16.4)
25 ,, ,, 50 ,,	4 (0.3)	114.43 (2.2)
50 ,, and above	nil	nil
Total	1,382 (100.0)	5,216.53 (100.0)

NOTE:—Figures within brackets are percentages to total.

Thus, there were 1,382 holdings with the families living in the sample villages, with a total area of 5,216.53 acres. Some holdings were held jointly by more than one family. Agricultural owners held 1,046 or 75.7 per cent of the holdings covering 79.1 per cent of the total area. Cultivating tenants had 212 holdings or 15.3 per cent covering about 16.3 per cent of the area. Agricultural workers held only 39 or 2.8 per cent of the holdings covering 85.79 acres or 1.6 per cent and non-agricultural families had 85 or 6.2 per cent of the holdings accounting for 3.0 per cent of the area. There were 189 or 13.7 per cent of holdings which were each less than 1 acre. Of these, 12 belonged to agricultural workers. The cumulative frequencies for important groups of holdings with the average size per holding are given in the following table[1] :

TABLE 171

Size groups	Cumulative frequencies	Percentage to total	Average size per holding in acres
Under 5 acres ..	1,034	74.8	2.3
Under 10 acres ..	1,315	95.0	3.2
Under 25 acres ..	1,378	99.0	3.7

It follows that 74.8 per cent of the total number of holdings were of 5 acres and less, and the average size of holding in the group was 2.3 acres. These 74.8 per cent of the total number of holdings below 5 acres occupied 2,347 acres, that is, only 44.3 per cent of the total holding area.

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[1] Ibid, p. 219.

Intensive Training Of Panchayat Workers In Early Years

The State of Jammu and Kashmir had had a remarkable development of the Panchayat institution, far in advance of many States of India. The Village Panchayat Act (Act V of *Samvat* 2008) was put on the Statute Book as early as 1951. Even in the first year of their work, the Panchayats in the State achieved encouraging results. A special feature was the attention given to training of Panchayat workers. A training camp for the training of constructive workers was organised at Jammu from 28th June, 1951, to 19th July, 1951, in which all the members of the Panchayat Department, i.e., Panchayat Organisers, Assistant Rural Development Officers, Overseers, Inspectors and Sub-Inspectors participated. Four social workers from the Work Centres at Poonch, Rajouri and Kathua, organised for the displaced unattached women and children, Assistant Registrar, Co-operative Societies, Jammu, Inspector Co-operative Department and two social workers from Gandhi Sewa Sadan, Srinagar, also participated. The following subjects were taken up for study in the camp :

1. History of the development of the human society;
2. Community life;
3. Development of National Movements in the world with a particular reference to its development in Jammu and Kashmir State;
4. Exhaustive study of the *New Kashmir;*
5. Development Plans of Kashmir State;
6. Agrarian Reforms in Kashmir;
7. Responsibilities and duties of an individual in the building of a nation;
8. Responsibilities and duties of citizens of the frontier areas towards the State;
9. Gandhian way of life;
10. Village Organisations :
    (a) Panchayats;
    (b) Co-operatives;
    (c) Education—Adults and Children;
    (d) Animal Husbandry;
    (e) Agricultural Improvements;
    (f) Cottage Industries;
    (g) Wise-parenthood; and
    (h) Folk culture;
11. Health—personal and community;
12. First Aid;

13. A.R.P ; and
14. Practical work in neighbouring villages.

The subjects were divided into suitable number of lectures and discussions. The services of experienced officers from various departments were borrowed for delivering lectures on various topics, indicated above. High ranking leaders and other political workers also delivered lectures on the topics connected with them. Practical work was done in the neighbouring villages in respect of improvement in livestock, better methods of agriculture, intensive farming, hygienic living, sanitation and plantation, etc. Training in First Aid and A.R.P. was imparted by two army officers. The training camp was a great success and the authorities who visited the camp observed that possibility of arranging similar camps for the training of workers in the State should be explored.

Panchayat *Melas* And Conferences In *Samvat* 2008

In *Samvat* 2008, again, Panchayat *Melas* were organised at Mangochak in tehsil Jasmergarh and Kirpind in tehsil Ranbirsinghpura. The Veterinary Department organised cattle shows at these *Melas*. The Agriculture and Co-operative Departments established their stalls and the Panchayats organised the cattle markets. Sports were organised on a large scale in which the teams from various Panchayats of these tehsils participated. *Bhangra*, a local dance performance, formed a vital part of these *Melas*. Preparations were made ahead for the cultural revival of those *Bhangras*. The *Mela* at Mangochak was organised at the outer skirts of the border, in order to remove the fear from the minds of the people for the border and to direct them towards cultivation of lands which were lying vacant since disturbances.

In order to afford possibilities of contact among the various Panchayats and to discuss at length the implementation of the programme of the working of the Panchayats, conferences were held at following places in Kashmir Province :

TEHSIL ANANTNAG

(1) Utterso Brariangan
(2) Seerkainlingund
(3) Kukarnag

TEHSIL KHAS

(1) Shalabug
(2) Solura
(3) Zakura

TEHSIL BARAMULLA

(1) Harduabura
(2) Kunjar
(3) Tangmarg
(4) Magam
(5) Dobiwan
(6) Devpora
(7) Mowlari
(8) Khanpeth
(9) Ghund Khawaja Qasim
(10) Pattan

(11) Kreri
(12) Wagura
(13) Kalantra
(14) Delina
(15) Fatehpora

TEHSIL KULGAM

(1) Khudwani
(2) Howand Chowalgam
(3) Kachdora
(4) Chamba Gund
(5) Kulgam
(6) Arah
(7) Khoribatapora
(8) Nagam
(9) Harwan
(10) Kader
(11) Trisal
(12) Devsar
(13) Quazigund
(14) Panzeth
(15) Chaksidi Khan
(16) Qaimoh

TEHSIL SOPORE

(1) Rehama
(2) Bandipora
(3) Chijihama

TEHSIL WANDWARA

(1) Drugmulla
(2) Dupwara
(3) Sogam
(4) Wadipora

TEHSIL PULWAMA

(1) Rajpora
(2) Ratnipora
(3) Tral
(4) Romoh
(5) Kangan
(6) Qasbayar
(7) Abhama
(8) Keygam
(9) Dralagam
(10) Newa
(11) Murran

The *Hallasheri* System Of Labour: Its Benefits

The works of highest utility and of material benefit and value the accomplishment of which requires whole-sale labour were undertaken under *Hallasheri* system of labour. These works briefly described below were done either free of cost or on payment of nominal wage according to the contingencies :

JAMMU PROVINCE

(a) Construction of roads covering 25 miles;
(b) Construction of pony roads covering 30 miles;
(c) Construction and repair of 2,103 village paths;
(d) Repair of 600 *khuls;*
(e) Repair of 8 ponds;
(f) Repair of 6 bunds;
(g) Construction of a well at village Pati in Samba;
(h) Construction of 16 school buildings;
(i) Construction of 7 Panchayat Ghars;
(j) Removal of village rubbish—11,830 heaps;
(k) Cleaning of *baolies*—215; and
(l) Construction of manure pits—6,714.

KASHMIR PROVINCE

(a) Construction of new roads, 185 miles;
(b) Repair of old roads, 296 miles;
(c) Raising of bunds, 50 miles;
(d) Dissilting of 163 *khuls;*
(e) Construction of 6 new *khuls;*
(f) Digging of manure pits—20,088.

Among the above works road constructions and dissilting of *khuls* range are of supreme value. The road building is part of a five-year programme of connecting and inter-connecting each village road with the main roads and also of opening new means of communication. Similarly, the dissilting of *khuls* is not only meant for ensuring equitable distribution of irrigation water but also for expanding and facilitating the irrigation arrangements. The works in this direction during the year supplied water to various *Paiab* villages and also minimised the feuds and quarrels which heretofore arose on account of misarrangement and scarcity of irrigation waters.

Constitution Of Panchayats

We have described above just a few of the activities of Panchayats in the State in *Samvat* 2008 to show how even in their first year they made a tremendous advance. The field of activity also extended to sanitation and health, tree plantation, education, etc. By the end of 1954, as many as 4,774 villages (excluding Pakistan-occupied area) were covered by 751 Panchayats. We will now proceed to describe the main features of the Panchayat Act of the State.

On an average, five to seven villages are covered by one Panchayat. Generally, the Panchayat units are co-extensive with revenue *Pathwar Halqas.* The Act provides for establishment of Panchayats with a majority of elected members. Elections are generally held on the basis of adult franchise as provided in the Act.

The powers of nominating members to Panchayats is not generally exercised. In areas where public opinion is very well advanced, almost all the seats are thrown open for election. It is only in backward areas where suitable persons cannot usually be found among the elected members that the power of nominating members is exercised by the officers of the Department.

Generally, the voting is held by show of hands in a general meeting of the voters of the areas. The new rules under the Act have also provided for vote by ballot. According to these, the Panchayat areas will be divided into a number of manageable constituencies from which one or more members may be elected, according to the local conditions.

Panchayat Functions

The Panchayats in the State can, subject to such rules as may be prescribed, exercise the administrative, municipal and judicial powers as detailed below :

It is the duty of the Panchayats to arrange for :

(a) Construction, maintenance, improvements and repairs of all the village roads, thoroughfares and streets that are not under the administrative control of any other department;

(b) Construction, maintenance in good condition and repairs of all bunds and embankments on rivers, streams and lakes and to arrange for protection of agricultural lands; digging of exit channels, new irrigation *khuls,* waterways and silt clearance, deepening, widening, repairing and maintaining in proper condition all *khuls* and such other water-courses as are necessary for the maintenance of irrigation facilities of agricultural lands;

(c) Storage of manure in pits of prescribed standard and prohibiting the use in fields of any manure other than that stored in pits or prepared under proper direction;

(d) Procurement of improved varieties of seeds of food and commercial crops and inducing use of such seeds for cultivation within the Panchayat area.

To stave off the fuel scarcity obtaining in the State, the Panchayats are entrusted with the duty of plantation of trees on all available waste lands. In this connection it may be stated that the Panchayats had, by 1954, planted 12,00,000 saplings which in due course will help minimize the fuel scarcity in the valley of Kashmir.

It is also the duty of a Panchayat to regulate the construction of new buildings or the extension or alteration of any existing building within the village site. For the improvement of sanitation, a Panchayat can direct the owner or occupier of any land or building, taking into consideration his financial position, to close, remove, alter, repair, etc., any latrine, urinal, water-closet, cesspool or other receptacle or filth. For the proper upkeep of village lanes and building of latrines, etc., the sanitation cess fund which has been realized from the villagers along with the land revenue was transferred to Panchayats. With this fund the Panchayats will be responsible to look after the cleanliness in each Panchayat Unit.

Besides, the Panchayat has to make, within the limits of its finances, arrangements for excavation, maintenance, improvement and disinfection of wells, tube-wells, ponds, etc., and construction of reservoirs, repairs of ponds, springs, etc.

The State also provides financial assistance every year which runs into lakhs of rupees for improvement works in each Panchayat area, such as road-building, construction of deep wells, reservoirs, latrines, bath rooms, protection bunds and irrigation *khuls*. This aid does not form part of the budget of the individual Panchayat. The people residing in Panchayat circles also contribute towards the execution of these works in the shape of voluntary labour. For this the Panchayats mobilize public opinion.

Judicial Aspect

There are no separate Adalats or Nyaya Panchayats. The Panchayats are empowered to entertain and decide civil and criminal cases of the value of Rs. 25 and Rs. 10, respectively, subject to certain exceptions as detailed in Sections 20 and 21 of the Village Panchayat Act. The Panchayat can take cognizance of a suit valued at Rs. 200, provided the parties mutually agree in writing to be filed before the Panchayat that they will abide by the decisions of the Panchayat in such a suit. The Head of the Panchayat Department can confer on selected Panchayats enhanced powers to (a) hear and determine suits in Section 20 upto any value not exceeding Rs. 75, (b) take cognizance of the offences of theft, mischief, etc., where the property stolen or loss caused does not exceed Rs. 30 in value. A Panchayat can as well inflict penalties.

Judicial powers exercised by Panchayats, though of a restricted nature, have saved the people both money and time which they had otherwise to spend in attending law courts. There has been a definite fall in the number of cases from Panchayat villages in the law courts.

Sources Of Revenue

The sources of revenue are :

(1) Fees levied in judicial cases;
(2) Fines imposed under the Act;
(3) Voluntary contributions from the people;
(4) Taxation (these powers have not yet been exercised in actual practice);
(5) Contribution from Village Sanitation Cess Fund;
(6) Contribution from Government (whenever any improvement work requires to be executed in any Panchayat area, the Government provides funds for the purpose). This amount does not form part of the budget of the individual Panchayat.

Revenues are being spent on:

(1) Stationery, office rent, contingencies, furniture and payment of honoraria to menials, etc.; and

(2) For improvement of village sanitation and for village improvements in general, i.e., improvements of springs, pavement of village lanes, construction of drains and for construction and repairs of drinking water wells.

Generally a permanent advance of Rs. 25 (or according to the nature of the funds collected by the Panchayats, this amount may be enhanced) is kept at the disposal of the Panchayats. For other expenditure prior sanction of the officers of the Department is necessary. In this behalf powers have been delegated to the different officers according to their status.

Control And Co-ordination

The Act provides for the election of the president (Sarpanch) by the members of the Panchayat and not by the electorate directly. No executive officer functions under the Panchayat.

Rules under the Act provide for the appointment of clerical and other staff. Rules governing their appointment and terms of service have been laid down and these are generally in conformity with the rules pertaining to public servants in the State. The local Revenue Officers are in no way connected with the Panchayat administration at the village level. No such co-ordination exists at present nor is any authority exercised by the District Officers of the Government over the Panchayats. Execution of decrees and realisation of fines imposed by the Panchayats, however, is made by the Tehsildar. As such, in actual practice the Revenue Officer has to play an important part in the administration of the Panchayats.

From the very inception, there has been in existence a separate Panchayat Department with its staff at State Headquarters, district level, tehsil level and sub-tehsil level. There are one Director, two Provincial Panchayat Officers, seven Assistant Rural Development Officers, sixteen Inspectors and sixty-one Sub-Inspectors. The Director functions at the State level. He is the controlling and coordinating head of the different provincial administrative units of the Panchayat Department. Below the Director there are two Provincial Officers, one for Jammu provincial administrative unit and the other for Kashmir. The provincial unit has further been subdivided for purposes of administration into divisional units. Each unit is under the charge of a gazetted officer designated as Assistant Rural Development Officer and extends over an area determined according to the number of the Panchayats in each sub-area. At some places the jurisdiction of Assistant Rural Development Officer extends over an administrative district and at other places it extends to over two districts or even more. In future the idea is to have one Assistant Rural Development Officer for each tehsil.

Below the Assistant Rural Development Officer there is Panchayat Inspector whose jurisdiction generally extends over one tehsil. At some places it is more than one.

Below the Inspector there are a number of Sub-Inspectors in each tehsil. The jurisdiction of a Sub-Inspector extends over fifteen Panchayats on an average, depending upon the density of population of the area and its topographical conditions.

At the sub-tehsil level, the Sub-Inspector is responsible for supervising and guiding the work of the Village Panchayats. At the tehsil and district level supervision is exercised by the Inspector and the Assistant Rural Development Officer, respectively. The A.R.D.O. has, besides the Inspector and Sub-Inspector, the technical staff of the Department under him. This technical staff comprises of overseers and *mistries* who are required to frame estimates of the improvement works that may have to be executed in the Panchayat areas. The A.R.D.O. is also responsible for execution of these works in his jurisdiction.

The Department possesses powers of superseding a Panchayat under Sections 10, 11 and 12.

Tehsil Panchayat Boards

For each tehsil, there is a Panchayat Board. Its functions and powers are given below:

(1) To establish a judicial committee for deciding cases mentioned in Section 118;

(2) To draw plans for improvement of communications, irrigation facilities, granting of stud bulls for improvement of breeds of cattle, distribution of improved seeds, etc., in the tehsil.

Sixty per cent of the revenue from the road cess of the tehsil shall be the main source of their fund, besides the fees levied for institution of appeals that come up for disposal before the Board.

Joint Committees Of Panchayats

A special feature of Panchayats in Jammu and Kashmir is the provision for joint committees of Panchayats. Their functions, powers and duties as provided in the rules are given below :

(1) Construction, maintenance, improvement and repair of roads that pass through the area of more than one Panchayat;

(2) Construction, maintenance, etc., of all irrigation *Khuls*, springs and water shoots (not under the control of the Irrigation Department) which pass through the area of more than one Panchayat;

(3) Plantation of trees on roads and *Khuls* under the control of Joint Committee;

(4) All or any of the functions of Panchayats under Sections 62, 66, 72, 75, 76, 92, 94 and 95 of the Act and, in particular, medical relief including maternity and child welfare, etc. These functions can be performed under the orders of the Panchayat Officer.

It would follow from the foregoing account of Panchayats in Jammu and Kashmir that in many respects they are more thoroughgoing and comprehensive than provided for in Panchayat legislations of numerous other Indian States. The attempt has been to develop the initiative of rural people, and the effort has paid rich dividends. A study of Panchayat work in the State would be full of useful lessons for our Panchayat development.

BOOK THREE

BOOK THREE

PANCHAYAT PROBLEMS

"Indian Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus, every village will be a republic or a Panchayat, having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs, even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world. It will be trained and prepared to perish in the attempt to defend itself against any onslaught from without. Thus, ultimately, it is the individual who is the unit. But this does not exclude dependence on the willing help from the neighbour or from the world. It will be free and voluntary play of mutual forces. Such a society is necessarily highly cultured, in which every man and a woman knows what he or she wants and, what is more, knows that no one should want anything that the others cannot have with equal labour.

"This society must naturally be based on truth and non-violence, which, in my opinion, are not possible without a living force which inheres every other force known to the world, and which depends on none, and which will live when all other forces may conceivably perish or cease to act. I am unable to account for my life, without belief in this all-embracing living light.

"In this structure composed of innumerable villages there will be ever-widening, never-ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But, it will be an oceanic circle, whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units.

"If ever there is to be a republic of every village in India, then I claim verity for my picture, in which the last is equal to the first, or, in other words, no one is to be the first and none the last."

—Mahatma Gandhi

"The real problems for me remain problems of individual and social life, of harmonious living, of proper balancing of an individual's inner and outer life, of an adjustment of the relations between individuals and between groups, of a continuous becoming something better and higher, of social development, of the ceaseless adventure of man."

—Jawaharlal Nehru

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE INDIAN VILLAGE

"The cultivators form the overwhelming majority, and in real consideration they represent the country. The peasants are cultivating the field with a blunt borrowed plough, in the mid-day sun, knee-deep in mud, helped by a pair of bullocks all skin and bone. Their heads are scorched under the cruel sun of the "Bhadra" and they are almost dying of thirst and drinking the muddy water with folded palms. Their hunger is almost unbearable, and yet they cannot go home to take their food because of the exigencies of the season of cultivation. Only towards the evening would they enter their homes and partially satisfy their hunger with boiled coarse rice, salt and green chillies served in half-broken vessels of stone. Then they would stretch their limbs on a torn mat or on one side of the floor of the cow-shed. They do not feel the sting of the mosquitoes. They would resume, next morning, their work in the field knee-deep in mud; or they would be detained on the way by some landlord or money-lender who would drag them away, for their debts, and the work of the field would be stopped. The landlord may even confiscate the cultivated plot. What then will happen that year? Starvation for the whole family." [1]

—*BANKIM CHANDRA CHATTOPADHYAYA*

"India is mainly a rural country consisting of 7,00,000 villages. ......I regard the growth of cities as an evil thing, unfortunate for mankind and the world, unfortunate for England and certainly unfortunate for India. The British have exploited India through its cities. The latter have exploited the villages. The blood of the villages is the cement, with which the edifice of the cities is built. I want the blood that is today inflating the arteries of the cities to run once again in the blood-vessels of the villages." [2]

—*MAHATMA GANDHI*

PANCHAYAT problems in fact are the problems of our peasant masses, and have, therefore, to be viewed in their totality. A purely administrative or a local self-government approach, if we may use this term, would be perfunctory, would be divorced from reality, would not go at the roots, and, therefore, of not much use. The peasant being Indian humanity, and the object of Panchayat re-organisation being to help the evolution of the personality of our peasantry to its full growth and stature, it is of the utmost importance that we keep before us a picture of our villages and peasants as they are today, and the social pattern that obtains there, for it is this pattern we are out to change and peacefully transform into a socialist pattern.

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[1] From an essay by Bankim written in **Banga Darshan** in 1871. The English rendering by Dr. Kalidas Nag appeared in **Harijan** of 13.8.1938.

[2] Interview with foreign correspondents at Mussoorie in 1946. Quoted from Tendulkar's **Mahatma**, Vol. III, pp. 154-155.

In Book Two, in the different State Chapters, we have attempted a population study of the rural population in different States of the Indian Union. And the analysis has everywhere revealed gross mal-distribution of land, the large percentages of the landless population, and the overwhelming preponderance of cultivators of petty uneconomic holdings. We will now make a similar analysis for whole of India. The subject being vast, and the space limited, we have of necessity to be brief.

Livelihood Pattern In Pre-1951 Censuses : A Rapid Review

Before viewing the rich material made available to us by the first Census of free India in 1951[1], we would cursorily glance at the position as revealed by previous Censuses. Steady increase in population, decline of village industries, absence of a planned scheme of industrialisation to absorb the persons thus rendered without any occupation and rise in land values have, among other things, been mainly responsible for increasing pressure on land.

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[1] Said the late Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel: "Census as an institution goes back to the remote past, but it is no longer a mere counting of heads; it involves extraction of information which plays a vital role in the determination of many of our administrative policies. The facts elicited during the course of this operation yield valuable scientific data of sociological importance. In many matters it provides a useful guide for the effectiveness or otherwise of our economic policies." The entirely different level of the 1951 Census would also be clear from the following remarks of late Sardar Patel at the first Census Conference: "Hitherto, the Census used to be looked upon as a decennial operation for which haphazard temporary arrangements used to be made...... There is now a permanent Census Act on the Statute Book and Government have already a permanent office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner. It is our intention through this unified organisation to effect continuous improvement over the whole field of population data including the Census and vital statistics......" In the course of instructions issued to the field workers on the eve of the 1951 Census, Shri C. Rajagopalachari, then Home Minister of the Government of India, said : "Like a swarm of bees that build a beautiful hive according to the laws of geometry, each doing its part in obedience to a mystic urge, you should do your part according to conscience and the sense of truth inherent in us all." (Quoted from Census of India, 1951, Vol. I, India, Part I-A-Report by R. A. Gopalaswami.)

The available figures for 1911, 1921 and 1931 [1] are given below to show the percentage increase or decrease under principal occupational sub-heads :

TABLE 172

Occupational Sub-Head	Percentage of total workers			Percentage increase (+) or decrease (−) since 1911
	1911	1921	1931	
Pasture and Agriculture	70.82	71.67	66.57	− 6.0
Fishing and Hunting ..	0.51	0.50	0.54	+ 6.0
Mining ..	0.51	0.24	0.23	+ 9.5
Industry ..	11.76	10.75	9.97	− 15.2
Transport ..	1.60	1.34	1.53	− 4.4
Trade ..	5.44	5.50	5.15	− 5.3
Public administration and liberal arts ..	2.89	2.83	2.69	− 6.9
Miscellaneous ..	6.77	7.17	13.32	+ 96.8

The data given in the 1931 Report indicate a persistent tendency towards increased dependence on agriculture—the number under this head having increased from 91 millions in 1901 to 105 millions in 1931. The 1931 Census placed the figure at 103 millions but the Census Commissioner admitted that this was due to a change in a system of classification whereunder females returned their occupation as 'domestic service'. It is because of the transference of this bulk of agricultural female labourers that 'miscellaneous' group above shows an increase of nearly 97 per cent in a decade. Taking this fact into account, the dependence of the population on agriculture would show a steady increase from 61.1 per cent in 1891 to approximately 71 per cent in 1911, and 73 per cent in 1931.

Agricultural Labourers In Previous Censuses

The following table [2] will show that most of the rural workers of the handicrafts and manual type, having been compelled to abandon their traditional occupations, had now taken to cultivation:

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[1] The 1941 Census, during World War II, was a limited operation which ignored occupational classification. During the 1931 Census, the Indian National Congress had launched a Civil Disobedience Movement, and under instructions of the then Dictator of the Movement, the late Deshpriya J. M. Sen Gupta, the Nation boycotted it, and the returns may not be very reliable. Prof. S. Chandrashekhar says : "There are no reliable or complete statistics available regarding the classification of the total population according to occupations. The 1941 Census has omitted such a classification, while the 1931 Census gives classifications only for persons following occupations (i.e., earners plus working dependents plus those following callings as subsidiary occupations). The rest of the population, which is numerically larger representing mainly non-working dependents, remains unclassified, and there is no way of classifying them in terms of their occupation except by inference, on the precarious assumption that the proportion of non-working dependents to workers is constant throughout." (India's Population : Fact and Policy, pp. 79-81).

[2] Based on Table XI "Occupation of Selected Castes," Census of India 1931, Vol. I. Part II., pp. 414-419.

TABLE 173

Caste, tribe or race	Traditional Occupations	Total number of workers in the caste, tribe or race	Workers engaged in traditional occupation	Workers engaged in exploitation of animals and vegetation.	Percentage of	
					4 to 3	5 to 3
1	2	3	4	5	6	
A—1. **Chamar**	1. Skinners and tanners	67,10,365	11,99,732	40,28,941	17.8	60.0
2. **Nai**	2. Barbers					
3. **Bhangi**	3. Scavengers					
B—1. **Khatik**	1. Pig Breeders	15,99,436	6,74,853	11,41,698	25.9	43.9
2. **Gujar**	2. Herdsmen					
3. **Teli, etc.**	3. Oil pressers					
C—1. **Pinjara**	1. Cotton carders	28,27,147	9,59,194	11,10,094	33.9	39.2
2. **Darzi**	2. Tailors					
3. **Momin, etc.**	3. Weavers					
4. **Dhobi**	4. Washermen					
D—1. **Kumbhar**	1. Potters	10,45,920	3,92,362	4,00,278	37.5	38.0
2. **Lodh, etc.**	2. Earthworkers					
E—1. Barhai	1. Carpenter	17,97,697	7,72,985	4,16,496	42.9	23.1
2. **Lohar**	2. Blacksmith					
3. **Sonar**	3. Goldsmith					
Total, including other non-cultivating castes		1,66,50,410	44,87,538	80,43,375	26.9	47.1

It is thus found that in 1931, only 27 per cent of the workers were engaged in their traditional non-agricultural occupation and that about 64 per cent of those who had given it up had taken to agriculture.

A further split up of population engaged in agricultural and pastoral pursuits as given by the 1931 Census would be found in Table 174 (p. 673).

The number of landless agricultural labourers steadily increased during the preceding fifty years and more. In 1882, the Census estimated 7.5 million "landless day labourers" in agriculture. The figure for 1891 was 18.7 million, and in 1931 it was over 33 million, or one-third of those engaged in agriculture; the number of labourers per 1,000 cultivators rose from 254 to 417 in the same period. The number dependent on industry declined from 46 million in 1901 to 34 million in 1931, and the man-land ratio rose from 191 to 245 in the same period. The increase in the number

TABLE 174

Occupation	Number
Cultivation :	
Non-cultivating landlords	41,50,758
Cultivators (owners or tenants) ..	6,54,95,244
Estate agents, managers, rent collectors, clerks, etc.	2,69,450
Agricultural labourers	3,35,23,423
Total ..	10,34,38,875
Cultivation of special crops, fruits, etc. (Planters, managers, clerks, labourers) ..	19,07,126
Forestry	4,12,631
Stock Raising	39,11,335
Raising of small animals	60,821

of agricultural labourers—the 'floating' population as they have been called, working in cities for part of the year and for the remaining months seeking employment in agricultural operations —was a direct result of the growing dependence on agriculture and the consequent pressure on land.[1] The following table gives the number of cultivating owners, tenant cultivators and agricultural labourers in different Provinces as revealed by the 1931 Census :

TABLE 175

Province	Cultivating Owners	Tenant Cultivators	Agricultural Labourers
	(Number in thousands)		
Assam ..	997	597	55
Bengal ..	5,084	816	2,458
Bihar and Orissa ..	330	7,908	3,121
Bombay ..	834	1,104	2,344
C.P. and Berar ..	1,995	111	2,923
Madras ..	4,500	1,340	4,257
N.W.F.P. ..	221	150	36
Punjab ..	1,762	1,157	545
United Provinces ..	1,185	9,580	3,105

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[1] Says Dr. Chandrashekhar : "Most of these landless labourers, variously called 'agricultural serfs' and 'debt slaves', are former free peasants who have lost their lands and become virtually enslaved to their creditors through debt or who have been reduced to the bondage of share-cropping." (**India's Population : Fact and Policy, Op. cit.**)

Growth Of Indian Population

And now let us turn to the 1951 Census.[1] India lives in 29 States, including the State of Jammu and Kashmir, and Andhra carved out of Madras. Extending over an area of 12,69,644 sq. miles, it is the seventh largest country in the world. During the decennium ending 1951, the mean decennial growth-rate increased in all States except the Punjab and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, where the rate actually declined by 0.5 and 8.6 per cent, respectively.[2] The following table[3] gives the growth-rate for India and Part 'A' States for three periods, 1901-50, 1921-50 and 1941-50 :

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[1] For the 1951 Census, the Registrar-General formulated a new All-India Scheme of Union Population Zones, Natural Regions, Sub-Regions and Divisions. In the Agricultural Labour Enquiry, Intensive Family Survey, and otherwise as well, this very system has been followed. We will have to refer to it later and so it would be worthwhile to indicate it here. The six Union Population Zones are: (1) North India consisting of Uttar Pradesh; (2) East India consisting of Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal, Assam, Manipur, Tripura and Sikkim; (3) South India consisting of Madras, Mysore, Travancore-Cochin and Coorg; (4) West India consisting of Bombay, Saurashtra and Kutch; (5) Central India consisting of Madhya Pradesh, Madhya Bharat, Hyderabad, Bhopal and Vindhya Pradesh; (6) North-West India consisting of Rajasthan, Punjab, PEPSU, Kashmir, Ajmer, Delhi, Bilaspur and Himachal Pradesh.

Besides this scheme of Union Population Zones, the All-India Scheme of Natural Divisions is summarised in the following table:

TABLE 176

No.	Name of Natural Region	No. of Natural Sub-regions	Natural Divisions
1.	Himalayan Region	2	10
2.	Northern Plains Region	4	13
3.	Peninsular Hills and Plateau Region	5	18
4.	Western Ghats and Coastal Region	2	8
5.	Eastern Ghats and Coastal Region	2	3
		15	52
			+ Bay Islands
			Total 53

[2] The rate was the highest in Delhi (62.1 per cent) followed by Coorg (30.5 per cent). It ranged between 10 and 20 per cent in most of the States, except Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, Bhopal, Vindhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and PEPSU, where the increase was below 10 per cent. The rate was only 7.9 per cent for Madhya Pradesh and 2.6 per cent for PEPSU.

[3] Census of India 1951, Vol. II, Uttar Pradesh, Part I-A-Report, Op. cit., p. 44. The U.P. Report gives the following table showing percentage growth of population in selected countries during 1900-50 (reproduced from United Nations Demographic Year Book, 1951) :

TABLE 177

Countries	Period	Percentage Growth
Brazil	1900-50	204.0
Union of South Africa	1904-46	120.6
Canada	1901-41	114.2
Australia	1901-47	100.8
U.S.A.	1900-50	98.3
Mexico	1900-50	86.4
Denmark	1901-50	74.7
Egypt	1907-47	70.1
India	1901-50	51.5
Italy	1901-36	32.4
United Kingdom	1901-51	31.3
Belgium	1900-47	27.2
Germany	1910-46	12.7
France	1901-46	5.3

TABLE 178

State		Net Variation 1901-50	Net Variation 1921-50	Net Variation 1941-50
India	..	*51.6*	*43.8*	*13.4*
Assam	..	137.1	70.1	19.1
Bihar	..	41.7	37.9	10.1
Bombay	..	69.5	60.9	23.2
Madhya Pradesh	..	57.8	34.5	8.2
Madras	..	55.5	40.5	14.4
Orissa	..	42.2	31.3	6.4
Punjab	..	20.7	29.2	–0.5
Uttar Pradesh	..	30.0	35.5	11.8
West Bengal	..	56.7	51.3	13.6

Major Indian States Ranked According To Population, Area And Density

It thus follows that during the period 1901-50, the population of India (recast in its present layout) increased by about 50 per cent. The following table [1] gives a picture of major Indian States ranked according to population, area and density :

TABLE 179

Rank	Population in Millions		Area in Sq. miles		Density per Sq. miles	
I	Uttar Pradesh	63.22	Madhya Pradesh	1,30,272	Travancore-Cochin	1,015
II	Madras	57.02	Rajasthan	1,30,207	West Bengal	806
III	Bihar	40.23	Madras	1,27,790	Bihar	572
IV	Bombay	35.96	Uttar Pradesh	1,13,409	Uttar Pradesh	557
V	West Bengal	24.81	Bombay	1,11,434	Madras	446
VI	Madhya Pradesh	21.25	Assam	85,012	Punjab	338
VII	Hyderabad	18.66	Hyderabad	82,162	Bombay	323
VIII	Rajasthan	15.29	Bihar	70,330	Mysore	308
IX	Orissa	14.65	Orissa	60,136	Orissa	229
X	Punjab	12.64	Punjab	37,378	Hyderabad	227
XI	Travancore-Cochin	9.23	West Bengal	30,775	Madhya Pradesh	163
XII	Mysore	9.07	Mysore	29,489	Rajasthan	117
XIII	Assam	9.04	Travancore-Cochin	9,144	Assam	106

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[1] Census of India, 1951, Vol. XIV, Mysore, Part I—Report, Op. cit., p. 16. The following table compares the area, population and density of India with some countries of the world :

TABLE 180

S. No.	State|Country			Area in sq. miles (000's omitted)	Population (millions)	Density per sq. mile
1.	India	..	..	1,269.6	356.8	281
2.	U.S.S.R. ..	..	..	8,598	193.0	22
3.	China ..	..	..	3,759	463.5	127
4.	U.S.A. ..	..	..	3,022	151.7	51
5.	Canada ..	..	..	3,690	13.8	4
6.	Pakistan		..	933	74.0	210
7.	Japan ..	..	..	142	82.9	588
8.	U.K. ..	..	..	94	50.6	544
9.	Belgium ..	.	..	12	8.6	720

Average Population And Area Per District In Different States

The average population and area per district for all the larger of the Indian States would be found in the following table[1] :

TABLE 181

State	Average per District		State	Average per District	
	Population	Area		Population	Area
(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)
Travancore-Cochin	23,20,106	2,286	Punjab ..	9,72,400	2,875
Bihar ..	22,34,775	3,907	Madhya Pradesh	9,65,797	5,921
Madras ..	21,92,923	4,915	Saurashtra ..	8,27,472	4,290
West Bengal ..	16,54,021	2,052	Rajasthan ..	6,11,632	5,208
Bombay ..	12,84,148	3,980	Assam ..	5,31,983	5,001
Uttar Pradesh ..	12,39,524	2,224	Madhya Bharat	4,97,135	2,905
Hyderabad ..	11,65,944	5,136	Vindhya Pradesh	4,46,836	2,950
Orissa ..	11,26,611	4,626	PEPSU ..	4,36,711	1,260
Mysore ..	10,08,330	3,277			

Rural And Urban Population In Different States

The 1951 Census returned a total population of 3,569 lakhs, out of which 619 lakhs lived in 3,018 towns and 2,950 lakhs were found in 5,58,089 villages. Prof. Chandrashekhar has remarked[2] : "Rural life and urban life present sharp contrast all over the world and the contrast is perhaps sharpest in India. A rural population is predominantly agricultural in its occupation, has a low density per sq. mile, and enjoys a high social and cultural stability arising out of cultural and ethnic continuity and homogeneity. All the traditional modes of culture are strongly preserved in rural society, promoting conservatism which offers the most resistance to reform and innovation. For these reasons detailed classification of the population on the basis of residential characteristics becomes necessary in any demographic analysis." The percentage of rural and urban population in the larger States of India would be found in the following table[3] :

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[1] Census of India, 1951, Vol. IX, Hyderabad, Part I-A-Report, Op. cit., p. 8.

[2] India's Population: Fact and Policy, Op. cit., p. 45.

[3] U.P. Census Report, Op. cit., p. 113. Percentage of rural and urban population in some countries would be found in the following table (reproduced from Assam Census Report, Op. cit., p. 127) :

TABLE 182

Country	Year	Percentage of population which is	
		Rural	Urban
United States	1940	43.5	56.5
Swedon	1935	67.7	32.3
Japan	1925	35.5	64.5
Germany	1933	43.5	56.3
France	1936	53.1	46.9
England	1930	22.7	77.3
Canada	1930	58.3	41.7

TABLE 183

State	Rural	Urban	State	Rural	Urban
India	*82.7*	*17.3*	Hyderabad	81.4	18.6
Assam	95.4	4.6	Madhya Bharat	81.9	18.1
Bihar	93.3	6.7	Mysore	76.0	24.0
Bombay	68.9	31.1	PEPSU	81.0	19.0
Madhya Pradesh	86.5	13.5	Rajasthan	82.7	17.3
Madras	80.4	19.6	Saurashtra	66.3	33.7
Orissa	95.9	4.1	Travancore-Cochin	84.0	16.0
Punjab	81.0	19.0	Himachal Pradesh	95.8	4.2
Uttar Pradesh	86.4	13.6	Vindhya Pradesh	91.4	8.6
West Bengal	75.2	24.8			

Thus, 82.7 per cent of our population is rural and only 17.3 per cent urban. The States with a lower degree of urbanisation are Orissa, Himachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Vindhya Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. The States of Bombay, West Bengal, Mysore, Madras, Punjab, PEPSU, Hyderabad, Madhya Bharat, Rajasthan and Travancore-Cochin are comparatively less rural. Uttar Pradesh stands in between these.

The predominantly rural character of our population would be made clearer from the following table[1] which gives the proportion of persons living in villages per 1,000 of population in the bigger States of India :

TABLE 184

State	Proportion of Rural population	State	Proportion of Rural Population	State	Proportion of Rural Population
1	2	1	2	1	2
Orissa	959	Travancore-Cochin	840	PEPSU	810
Assam	954	Rajasthan	827	Madras	804
Bihar	933	India	827	Mysore	760
Vindhya Pradesh	914	Madhya Bharat	819	West Bengal	752
Madhya Pradesh	865	Hyderabad	814	Bombay	689
Uttar Pradesh	864	Punjab	810	Saurashtra	663

Thus Orissa has the highest and Saurashtra the lowest proportion of population living in rural areas.[2]

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[1] C. K. Murthy : **Hyderabad Census Report**, Op. cit. p. 181.

[2] As C. K Murthy points out, it would be interesting to note that the proportion of rural population in Indian States is considerably higher than in many countries of the world, including both those which are highly industrialised as well as those which are primarily agricultural. To mention only a few, the corresponding proportion of rural population is 193 (1951) in England and Wales, 311 (1947) in Australia 360 (1950) in the United States, 373 (1947) in Belgium, 375 (1947) in Argentina, 437 (1950) in Sweden, 509 (1951) in Austria, 595 (1951) in Eire, 625 (1950) in Japan, 635 (1950) in Brazil, 699 (1947) in Egypt, 748 (1950) in Turkey, 759 (1948) in Philippines, 800 (1950) in Iran, 804 (1949) in Korea and 838 (1948) in Yugoslavia (Ibid, p. 181).

Distribution Of Rural Population In Villages Of Different Sizes

Let us now view the distribution of our rural population in villages of different sizes. Shri R. A. Gopalaswami gives an interesting pattern of village groups in different Union Population Zones. Suppose that the entire country is divided by lines drawn from north to south at regular intervals of 5 miles and by other lines drawn from east to west similarly at regular intervals of 5 miles. Then the entire Census territory would be divided into 47,074 squares, each of which will be five miles long and five miles broad. Shri Gopalaswami refers to these squares as 'village groups'. Gopalaswami says that an average Indian 'village group' will consist, in round figures, of a dozen villages, each with rather more than 500 inhabitants. There will be rather more than 6,000 villagers in each 'village group'. The following table shows how this pattern of 'village groups' differs in different zones[1]:

TABLE 185

Zone	Average No. of villagers per village	Villages and villagers in an average 'Village Group' (25 sq. miles)	
		No. of villages (round figure)	Number of villagers (in thousands)
North India	489	25	12.2
East India	433	18	7.8
South India	1,052	9	9.0
West India	708	7	5.0
Central India	431	9	3.9
North-west India	447	8	3.6
INDIA	529	12	6.3

As Gopalaswami says, the table reveals a puzzling fact. Either the size of the village is very large in some zones and very small in others; or what is called a 'village' means one thing in one zone and another thing in another zone. It would be seen that in the imaginary 'village group', the number of villagers in North-West and Central India is less than 4,000, while it is 12,000 in North India, which only indicates that the villagers are more densely settled in one zone than in another.

Again, it would be noticed that an average South Indian village is shown to have a population of 1,052, next comes West India with an average of 708, while all other zones have villages with average population ranging between 400-500 people only. Gopalaswami warns against drawing any set conclusions from these figures regarding density of settlement and gregarious living. He says: "What is reckoned for all administrative purposes (and consequently also for the Census) as a village, may or may not be the same as what we normally have in mind when we speak of a village." And he clarifies: "A village in the latter sense means or should mean a cluster of houses (or more than one closely adjoining cluster of houses), whose inhabitants are regarded by themselves as well as by others as a distinctive social unit with its identity marked by a distinctive local name. The village in the administrative sense is the *mauza*—a settled area with defined boundaries, for which village records have been prepared. In the south there is a further development by which contiguous administrative villages defined by land records have been grouped together for purposes of land revenue administration, and the group is referred to as the 'village'. The variations in the figures, therefore, merely bring out the differences in the delimitation of administrative villages." And Gopalaswami adds: "This does not, of course, mean that the real differences in the social unit—based on the house-cluster and local name—do not also exist. They do. Thus, for instance, in Travancore-Cochin and West Madras, where the average number of inhabitants per village is perhaps the largest, the houses do not cluster at all. The 'village', as it is understood in the rest of India, is scarcely to be found there."[1]

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[1] Census of India, 1951, Vol. I, India, Part 1-A-Report, Op. cit., p. 41.

The following table[2] gives the percentage of rural population living in villages of different sizes in the six Union Population Zones:

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[1] Ibid, pp. 42-43. The following remarks of Shri K. M. Panikkar regarding population distribution in India may be read with interest: "Though I can speak only as a layman, it is obvious that the unbalance in our population lies in its spatial distribution. While there are some areas in India, especially the deltaic regions and the Gangetic Valley which are over-populated, there are vast territories in Rajputana, in Central India and even in the Deccan where the density is meagre......What we require is a population policy which will take into consideration the problems of spatial adjustment and a long period programme in respect of food production which will bring the abandoned lands under the plough, etc.... (From speech at the inauguration of the Indian Institute for Population Studies at Annamalai University in Chidambaram, 7th March, 1950; quoted from A. Mitra's **West Bengal Census Report**, Op. cit., p. 385).

[2] Ibid, p 43.

TABLE 186

Zone	Percentage of rural population living in			
	Small villages (under 500)	Medium sized villages (500-2,000)	Large villages (2,000-5,000)	Very large villages (over 5,000)
North India	29.8	55.3	13.5	1.4
East India	33.8	48.6	14.3	3.3
South India	9.4	38.5	35.3	16.8
West India	18.1	55.0	23.9	3.0
Central India	35.7	50.4	13.0	0.9
North-West India	30.4	50.9	16.4	2.3
INDIA	26.5	48.8	19.4	5.3

The table shows that the medium-sized village with inhabitants numbering 500-2,000, is the dominant type in all the 6 zones. Gopalaswami says: "As a general statement, this is perhaps no less true of the village—in its natural sense—than of the administrative village, on which it is actually based."

Average Village Population And Area In Part 'A' States

The average village population and area in Part 'A' States of India would be found in the following table[1]:

TABLE 187

State	Average village population	Average village area in square miles
Assam ..	341	3.4
Bihar ..	526	1.0
Bombay ..	724	3.0
Madhya Pradesh ..	379	2.6
Madras ..	1,236	3.4
Orissa ..	290	1.2
Punjab ..	676	2.4
Uttar Pradesh ..	489	1.0
West Bengal ..	532	0.9

Thus, Madras, Bombay, Punjab, West Bengal and Bihar have a larger average village population than Madhya Pradesh, Assam and Orissa. Further, the average village area is smallest in West

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[1] Rajeshwari Prasad: U. P. Census Report, Op. cit., p. 115.

Bengal, U.P., Bihar and Orissa and the largest average village area is found in Assam and Madras.

The Livelihood Pattern Of The General Population

Let us now turn our attention to the livelihood pattern of our agricultural population. The distribution of our population in urban and rural and in agricultural and non-agricultural is summarised in the following table[1]:

TABLE 188

Category	Number (in lakhs)
A. By Region:	
1. Rural	2,950
2. Urban	619
3. Total	3,569
4. 1 as per cent of 3 ..	82.7
B. By Livelihood:	
1. Agriculture	2,491
2. Non-agricultural ..	1,076
3. Total	3,567
4. 1 as per cent of 3 ..	69.8

Note: The discrepency in the two tables is due to the loss of about 2.5 lakh Census slips in Punjab by fire.

The livelihood pattern for the bigger of the Indian States would be found in the following table[2]:

TABLE 189

State	Percentage of population dependent on				
	Agriculture	Production other than cultivation	Commerce	Transport	Other services and miscellaneous sources
INDIA	69.84	10.56	5.97	1.58	12.05
Assam	73,34	14.68	3.90	1.28	6.80
Bihar	56.04	3.94	3.40	0.72	5.90
Bombay	61.46	13.76	7.61	2.23	14.94
Madhya Pradesh ..	76.00	10.60	4.39	1.47	7.54
Madras	64.93	12.35	6.69	1.68	14.35
Orissa	79.28	6.33	2.91	0.53	10.95
Punjab	64.73	7.36	9.15	1.04	17.72
Uttar Pradesh	74.18	8.39	5.03	1.36	11.04
West Bengal	57.21	15.36	9.32	3.05	15.06
Hyderabad	68.16	13.54	5.12	1.30	11.88
Mysore	69.90	10.24	5.57	1.18	13.13
Rajasthan	70.87	8.88	6.58	0.94	12.73
Travancore-Cochin ..	54.85	21.19	6.80	3.41	13.75

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[1] Census of India, Paper No. 3, 1953, Summary Tables I and IV.

[2] U. P. Census Report, Op. cit., p. 100.

The table shows that Assam, though most rural among the Indian States, is less agricultural than, say, Uttar Pradesh (74.18 per cent); Madhya Pradesh (76.0 per cent), Orissa (79.28 per cent), and Bihar (86.04 per cent) are even more agricultural than Uttar Pradesh. The States with the lowest proportion of agricultural population are : Travancore-Cochin (54.85 per cent), West Bengal (57.21 per cent), Bombay (61.4 per cent), Punjab (64.52 per cent) and Madras (64.93 per cent). This distribution is brought in sharper relief in Table 191 [1] (p. 683) which gives the number of persons in one thousand population belonging to agricultural and non-agricultural classes in the larger States of India.

Livelihood Pattern Of The Agricultural Population

It follows that in 2 States the agricultural population is over 80 per cent of the total, in 6 States it is between 70 and 80 per cent, in 5 States it is between 60 and 70 per cent, and only in 2 it is under 60 per cent. The occupational distribution of our total agricultural population of 2,491 lakhs in different Part 'A', 'B' and 'C' States of India as shown by the 1951 Census would be found in Table 192 (p. 683).

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[1] Ibid, p. 205. The sharp contrast between the pattern of Indian population with some of the selected countries of the world would be seen in the following table reproduced from **U.P. Census Report**. It shows distribution of 1,000 persons of active population in agricultural and non-agricultural classes:

TABLE 190

Name of country	Year	Agricultural classes	Non-agricultural classes
U.S.A.	1940	176	824
Canada	1941	263	737
Mexico	1940	654	346
Brazil	1940	674	326
United Kingdom	1931	60	940
France	1946	365	635
Rumania	1930	787	213
Egypt	1937	707	293
Japan	1947	526	474
Uttar Pradesh	1951	754	246

Source : United Nations **Statistical Year Book, 1949-50.** The term 'economically active population' used in U.N. publications refers to that part of the population often designated as the "labour force" including unemployed as well as the gainfully employed' population. In general, it also includes persons working on their own account and unpaid family workers. This difference in classification notwithstanding, the contrast in the agricultural and non-agricultural population of India with other countries is nevertheless sharply brought out. Rumania alone is shown to have a higher agricultural population than, for example, Uttar Pradesh and the Rumanian data, is 26 years old). Egypt, Mexico and Brazil compare with some of our States in their agricultural population.

TABLE 191

State	Agricultural Classes	Non-Agricultural Classes
INDIA	*698*	*302*
Assam	733	267
Bihar	860	140
Bombay	615	385
Madhya Pradesh	760	240
Madras	649	351
Orissa	793	207
Punjab	645	355
Uttar Pradesh	742	258
West Bengal	572	428
Hyderabad	682	318
Madhya Bharat	722	278
Mysore	699	301
Rajasthan	709	291
Travancore-Cochin	548	452
Vindhya Pradesh	871	129

TABLE 192

States 1	Total agricultural population ('000) 2	Percentage of cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned and their dependents (Livelihood Class I) 3	Percentage of cultivators of land wholly or mainly unowned and their dependents (Livelihood Class II) 4	Percentage of cultivating labourers and their dependents (Livelihood Class III) 5	Percentage of non-cultivating owners of land and their dependents (Livelihood Class IV) 6
Part 'A' States :					
Assam	**6,633**	**78.9**	**17.5**	**2.4**	**1.2**
Bihar	**34,611**	**64.3**	**9.6**	**25.6**	**0.7**
Bombay	**22,098**	**66.3**	**15.8**	**14.7**	**3.2**
Madhya Pradesh	**16,149**	**65.1**	**5.9**	**26.8**	**2.2**
Madras	**37,021**	**53.8**	**14.8**	**28.1**	**3.3**
Orissa	**11,612**	**75.1**	**7.5**	**15.6**	**1.9**
Punjab	**8,069**	**59.8**	**24.9**	**11.9**	**3.4**
Uttar Pradesh	**46,897**	**83.9**	**7.9**	**7.7**	**1.4**
West Bengal	**14,195**	**56.5**	**21.0**	**21.4**	**1.1**
Part 'B' States :					
Hyderabad	**5,940**	**60.5**	**10.8**	**25.2**	**3.5**
Madhya Bharat	**2,210**	**69.8**	**14.1**	**14.8**	**1.3**
Mysore	**2,732**	**79.4**	**6.8**	**9.7**	**4.1**
PEPSU	**959**	**66.6**	**16.0**	**14.2**	**3.2**
Rajasthan	**4,454**	**61.1**	**32.3**	**4.4**	**2.2**
Saurashtra	**2,208**	**70.8**	**17.9**	**8.1**	**3.7**
Travancore-Cochin	**4,190**	**48.0**	**12.9**	**36.8**	**2.3**
Part 'C' States:					
Ajmer	**379**	**82.5**	**6.9**	**6.2**	**4.4**
Bhopal	**288**	**56.8**	**10.9**	**30.5**	**1.8**
Bilaspur	**12**	**84.9**	**12.2**	**1.7**	**1.2**
Coorg	**97**	**58.6**	**17.4**	**18.5**	**5.5**
Delhi	**1,572**	**72.2**	**9.6**	**17.0**	**3.2**
Himachal Pradesh	**69**	**90.7**	**7.2**	**1.0**	**1.1**
Vindhya Pradesh	**460**	**71.9**	**7.3**	**20.2**	**0.6**
INDIA	**249,122**	**68.17**	**12.7**	**17.99**	**2.14**

The table shows that 67.17 per cent of the agricultural classes belonged to Livelihood Category I, and 12.7 per cent to Category II. The non-cultivating rent-receivers were 2.14 per cent, and the cultivating labourers and their dependents numbered 17.99 per cent of the agricultural population. The proportion of agricultural labourers is highest in Travancore-Cochin (36.8 per cent), followed by the Part 'C' State of Bhopal (30.5 per cent), Madras (28.1 per cent), Madhya Pradesh (28.1 per cent), and Bihar (25.4 per cent). Assam (2.4 per cent) and Rajasthan (4.4 per cent) return the lowest percentage of agricultural labourers among the agricultural population.

Agricultural Labourers In The Rural Population

Expressed in terms of families living in rural areas, the agricultural labour families return a higher percentage. The following table shows the total number of rural families and of agricultural labour families in the Census Zones and major States :

TABLE 193

CENSUS ZONES AND MAJOR STATES	Total Population (millions)	Total Rural Population (millions)	Total No. of Rural Families (thousands)	Total No. of Agricultural Labour Families (thousands)	Percentage of Agricultural Labour families to Rural families (% of 5 to 4)	Average size of Agricultural Labour family	Average size of Agricultural Labour holdings
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
ALL INDIA	361.2	398.6	57,976	17,659	30.46	4.3	2.9
NORTH INDIA							
1. Uttar Pradesh	63.2	54.6	11,056	1,563	14.14	4.2	1.5
EAST INDIA	90.1	80.1	15,418	5,020	32.56	4.3	1.8
1. Assam	9.09	8.6	1,625	177	10.89	3.7	1.8
2. Bihar	40.2	37.5	6,694	2,661	39.75	4.5	1.6
3. Orissa	14.6	14.1	2,856	1,228	43.00	4.3	2.4
4. West Bengal	24.8	18.7	4,000	932	23.30	3.9	1.8
SOUTH INDIA	75.6	60.7	12,283	6.177	50.29	4.2	2.3
1. Madras	57.0	45.8	9,481	5,115	53.95	4.2	2.6
2. Mysore	9.1	6.9	1,286	540	41.99	4.3	3.9
3. Travancore-Cochin	9.3	7.8	1,466	516	35.20	4.8	0.8
WEST INDIA	40.7	28.0	5,179	1,104	21.32	4.3	5.0
1. Bombay	36.0	24.8	4,574	982	21.47	4.2	3.7
2. Saurashtra	4.1	2.7	494	99	20.04	4.5	16.3
CENTRAL INDIA	52.3	44.1	8,237	3,285	36.55	4.6	4.3
1. Madhya Pradesh	21.2	18.4	3,848	1,496	38.88	4.5	6.8
2. Madhya Bharat	7.9	6.5	1,234	280	22.69	4.8	8.7
3. Hyderabad	18.7	15.2	3,101	1,308	42.18	4.7	6.5
NORTH-WEST INDIA	39.3	31.1	5,053	510	10.09	4.7	6.3
1. Rajasthan	15.3	12.7	2,110	202	9.57	4.4	11.2
2. Punjab	12.6	10 2	1,809	183	10.12	5.0	4.0
3. PEPSU	3.5	2.8	531	70	13.18	5.2	3.7
4. Jammu & Kashmir	4.4	3.7	249	19	7.63	4.5	2.2

Thus, in India as a whole there are 17.6 million agricultural labour families, spread over a little more than half a million villages. Agricultural labourers thus form the largest group of labourers in our country. 1.6 million of these families are in North India, 5.0 million in East India, 6.2 million in South India, 1.0 million in West India, 3.3 million in Central India and 0.5 million in North-West India. Agricultural labourers form about 30.4 per cent of the total number of rural families and 22.7 per cent of the total number of both rural and urban families.

Low Income Of Agricultural Labourers

The figures drive us to certain irresistible conclusions. They show that despite the progress in the non-agricultural sector, in industry, transport, banking, etc., the occupational pattern has remained more or less unchanged in the agricultural sector. About 70 per cent of the population still derives its livelihood from land, and among them agricultural labour families count 17.6 million families. Viewed against the increase in population, and the land supply being limited, it is hardly surprising that this occupational pattern in agriculture has given rise to the vicious circle of low incomes and low investments in the agricultural sector fraught with grave consequences for our economy.

The Intensive Family Survey found the average size of an agricultural labour family to be 4.3, consisting of 2.0 earners, 0.3 helpers, and 2.0 dependents. This average family of 4.3 could secure in 1950-51 an average annual income of Rs. 447 only from all sources including self-cultivation of land and non-agricultural labour. The income of agricultural labourers in India in the different Census Zones and major States as given by the Agricultural Labour Enquiry would be found in Table 194 (p. 686).

The annual per capita income of an Indian agricultural labourer thus works out as Rs. 104, as against per capita income of Rs. 264[1]

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[1] We have come across varying statements about per capita income in India from responsible sources. Thus, on March 11, 1955, in a written reply to a question by Shri R. S. Lal in Lok Sabha, the Union Finance Minister, Shri C. D. Deshmukh said that the estimated per capita income of India for years 1951-52, 1952-53 and 1953-54 at current prices was Rs. 274.5, 267.4 and 283.9, respectively, while the per capita income for these years at 1948-49 prices was Rs. 251.7, 258.1 and 266.5, respectively. Earlier, on February 14, 1955, the Union Minister for Revenue and Civil Expenditure, Shri Manilal C. Shah, told the 47th Annual General Meeting of the Indian Merchants Chamber at Bombay: "The latest published data on national income relate to 1951-52. They show that in 1951-52, per capita national income was Rs. 251.7 as compared to Rs. 246.3 in 1950-51, Rs. 248.6 in 1949-50, Rs. 246.9 in 1948-49. These figures are in terms of constant 1948-49 prices, and they show some improvement." And Shri Shah added: "The tentative estimates for 1952-53 indicate a further improvement, per capita national income in that year being estimated at Rs. 261."

The latest information is given by the third issue of the annual paper on national income released by the Central Statistical Organisation on May 16, 1956, according to which the national income of India showed a very slight increase over the 1953-54 figure on the basis of 1948-49 prices. The corresponding figure at current prices, however, showed a decrease in 1954-55 as compared to 1953-54. The C.S.O. paper said that the per capita income at 1948 prices worked out to Rs. 269 in 1954-55 and 1953-54, as against Rs. 256 in 1952-53 and Rs. 246.9 in 1948-49.

TABLE 194

Census Zones and Major States	INCOME Total annual income per family (Rs.)	 Per Capita Income (Rs.)
ALL INDIA	447	104
NORTH INDIA (Uttar Pradesh)	551	131
EAST INDIA	506	118
1. Assam	610	162
2. Bihar	534	119
3. Orissa	340	79
4. West Bengal	622	159
SOUTH INDIA	382	91
1. Madras	365	87
2. Mysore	396	92
3. Travancore-Cochin	541	113
WEST INDIA	391	91
1. Bombay	368	88
2. Saurashtra	579	129
CENTRAL INDIA	417	91
1. Madhya Pradesh	390	87
2. Madhya Bharat	399	83
3. Hyderabad	455	97
NORTH-WEST INDIA	651	139
1. Rajasthan	604	137
2. Punjab	607	121
3. PEPSU	913	176

for the entire Indian population. It is as low as Rs. 79 in Orissa, Rs. 83 in Madhya Bharat, Rs. 87 in Madras and Madhya Pradesh and Rs. 88 in Bombay. In the year 1950-51, all the agricultural labour families in India, which formed about 22.7 per cent of the total number of Indian families, got only 8.3 per cent of the net national income.

Agricultural labourers as a class are extremely poor not only in comparison with the rest of the community taken as a whole but even in comparison with other classes of labour. Introducing the State Bank Bill in the Lok Sabha on April 23, 1955, Shri A. C. Guha, Minister for Revenue and Defence Expenditure, told the House : "In West Bengal the income of agricultural labour is Rs. 160 per year while the income of the industrial labour is Rs. 268, which means agricultural labour gets only 59 per cent of what the industrial labour gets. In Bihar, it is Rs. 119 for agricultural labour and

Rs. 332 for industrial labour, the percentage being 36. In Orissa it is Rs. 79 for agricultural labour and Rs. 145 for industrial labour, the percentage being 54. In Punjab, it is Rs. 121 for agricultural labour and Rs. 216 for industrial labour, the percentage being 56. In Bombay, it is Rs. 88 only for agricultural labour and Rs. 368 for industrial labour, the percentage being 24."

Extreme Poverty Of The Agricultural Wage Earners

The fact of the extreme poverty of the Indian agricultural labourer is corroborated by the standard of living of the average agricultural labour family as indicated by the pattern of its expenditure. The average annual expenditure for agricultural labour families in India and different zones by consumption groups would be found in the following table :

TABLE 195

Zones	Food	Clothing and foot-wear	Fuel and lighting	House-rent and repairs	Services and mis-cellaneous	Total
North India	464	43	6	4	31	548
East India	464	26	6	5	27	528
South India	323	27	5	5	37	397
West India	327	34	7	2	22	392
Central India	374	26	4	1	23	428
North-West India	571	52	6	3	42	674
ALL INDIA	393	29	5	4	30	461

Thus, out of Rs. 461 spent on recurring items of expenditure, as much as Rs. 393 were spent on food and Rs. 29 on clothing. The average annual expenditure on rest of the necessities came to only Rs. 39. In other words, an average family spent on food alone about 85.3 per cent of its actual expenditure. This total expenditure (Rs. 461) is slightly more than its income (Rs. 447). The average diet of the agricultural labourer is not only poor but also very unbalanced, the bulk of it being cereals. Protective food, especially protein food, is almost conspicuous by its absence.

The Agricultural Labour Enquiry attributed the poverty of the agricultural labour families to the following causes :

(i) Inability of the agricultural industry to provide adequate employment to agricultural labour families;

(ii) Lack of opportunities for self or non-agricultural employment;

(iii) Low wages earned for paid work.

It would be clear from Table 195 above that out of 17.6 million agricultural labour families, about 8.8 (50 per cent) were without any land while the remaining 50 per cent were cultivating some land on their own—either owned or taken on lease. The average holding of those families which were cultivating some land was 2.9 acres against the all India average of 7.5 acres.

Employment, Unemployment And Under-Employment Of Agricultural Workers

The number of days of employment on wages of agricultural labourers in the different zones and major States would be found in the following table :

TABLE 196

Census Zones and Major States	MEN			WOMEN		
	Agricultural labour	Non-agricultural labour	Total	Agricultural labour	Non-Agricultural labour	Total
NORTH INDIA (Uttar Pradesh)	255	34	289	119	24	143
EAST INDIA	182	42	224	99	24	123
1. Bihar	167	33	200	91	20	111
2. Orissa	199	57	256	113	37	150
3. West Bengal	200	46	246	152	36	188
4. Assam	208	48	256	136	19	155
SOUTH INDIA	160	21	181	132	7	139
1. Madras	159	19	178	134	6	140
2. Mysore	130	24	154	120	10	130
3. Travancore-Cochin	185	30	215	133	14	147
WEST INDIA	221	20	196	103	13	116
1. Bombay	173	20	193	102	11	113
CENTRAL INDIA	221	24	245	125	16	141
1. Madhya Pradesh	239	16	255	112	10	122
2. Madhya Bharat	173	48	221	108	28	131
3. Hyderabad	212	23	235	141	18	199
NORTH-WEST INDIA	177	25	202	98	17	115
1. Rajasthan	162	22	184	113	12	125
2. Punjab	164	24	188	35	29	64
3. PEPSU	273	8	281	50	1	51
ALL INDIA	189	29	218	120	14	134

Thus, on an average, an adult male was engaged in agricultural labour for 189 days, in paid non-agricultural labour for 29 days and was self-employed for 49 days, while he found no work for 98 days or about 27 per cent of the total number of days in the year. Here again, the position varied from State to State, the agricultural labourers in North India (U.P.) being unemployed for 50 days in the year and the agricultural labourers in West India (Bombay, Saurashtra, Kutch) being unemployed for 123 days in the year on an average. State-wise, the position was worse in the States of Madras (119 unemployed days), Bombay (118 unemployed days), Punjab (118 unemployed days), Travancore-Cochin (115 unemployed days) and Bihar (107 unemployed days) while it was relatively better in the States of PEPSU (59 unemployed days) and Orissa (58 unemployed days) with other States falling in between these extremes. As, however, these figures do not indicate the differences in the average intensities of daily employment in the various States, they have no direct bearing on the per capita incomes in these States. These figures indicate, nevertheless, a large measure of unemployment in so far as they reveal that an average male agricultural labourer does not do any paid or other work on about 98 days in a year. This is besides the large measure of under-employment which cannot be calculated with the aid of the data collected in this Enquiry. The presumption, however, is that in a State like Orissa where the number of unemployed days is relatively low, there must be considerable under-employment inasmuch as the per capita income is extremely low. In fact, the extremely low level of wages which prevail in almost all the country is itself an indication of general state of under-employment that prevails amongst this class of labour.

The position is even worse so far as women labourers are concerned. Taking India as a whole, the women agricultural labourers could get, on an average, hired employment on 120 days in agricultural and 14 days in non-agricultural labour. Here again, there were wide variations from State to State. While in West Bengal a woman labourer worked for wages on 188 days in the year, at the other extreme the corresponding figures for Punjab and PEPSU were 64 and 51. Employment opportunities for women labour has tended to decrease in so far as home industries, like handpounding of rice or hand spinning have been supplemented by large-scale factories for rice-milling, spinning, etc. To that extent the income for the family as a whole has been adversely affected.

Another significant fact brought out by the Agricultural Labour Enquiry is that 79 per cent of agricultural labourers in India could get no other work than paid employment on land and only 21 per cent had any subsidiary occupation. The percentage of agricultural labourers having subsidiary occupation varied from 30 per cent in East India and West India to 16 per cent in Central India. One of the reasons for agricultural labourer not being able to find subsidiary occupation is lack of finance with which they could provide themselves with means of self-employment.

Low Wages

The unemployment and under-employment of agricultural labourers apart, low wages in most areas for paid labour in agriculture is another feature of our village life. The average daily wage rates of agricultural labourers in the different zones and major States would be found in the following table :

TABLE 197

Census Zones and Major States		Men (in annas)	Women (in annas)
NORTH INDIA (Uttar Pradesh)	..	18.8	16.8
EAST INDIA		19.9	15.7
1. West Bengal	..	27.0	16.6
2. Bihar	..	20.2	17.7
3. Orissa	..	11.5	7.9
4. Assam	..	29.8	21.9
SOUTH INDIA	..	16.2	9.8
1. Madras	..	15.5	9.5
2. Mysore	..	14.6	9.4
3. Travancore-Cochin	..	21.4	13.3
WEST INDIA	..	18.0	12.5
1. Bombay	..	17.6	11.8
2. Saurashtra	..	21.5	19.5
CENTRAL INDIA	..	12.8	8.2
1. Madhya Pradesh	..	12.8	7.9
2. Madhya Bharat	..	13.7	9.4
3. Hyderabad	..	13.1	8.0
NORTH-WEST INDIA	..	22.8	15.8
1. Punjab	..	28.6	21.1
2. PEPSU	..	45.0	13.7
3. Rajasthan	..	19.7	15.2
ALL INDIA	..	17.5	10.8

The table shows that the average wage is highest in North-West India (23 annas) followed by East India (20 annas) and the lowest is recorded in Central India (13 annas). The average shows considerable variations among the States in the different zones in India. Thus, in East India, while the average is 27.8 annas in Assam, and 27 annas in West Bengal, it is as low as 11.5 annas in Orissa. North-West India appears to be the most prosper-out zone, in which PEPSU records the highest average wage, while in Rajasthan, an agricultural worker gets only 19.7 annas. In the South Zone, the average is high in Travancore-Cochin (21.4 annas) but it is only 15 annas in Madras and Mysore. The All-India average daily wage of a woman worker (10.8 annas) is lower than even the lowest wage of a male worker (11.5 annas in Orissa). It is highest in North India, being 17 annas, followed by North-West and East India (about a rupee) and the lowest in Central India (8 annas). There are considerable inter-State variations in the averages among the different zones.

Different Modes Of Wage Payment

The agricultural labourers may be classified in 2 groups : field labourers and skilled ones. The first category acts as ploughman, reaper, sower, weeder, transplanter, etc., during the sowing and harvesting seasons. This very category at other times seeks work in embankment, well-digging, road-making, etc., carried on in the year mostly by the Public Works Department. Carpenters, the village mason and the blacksmith, and other village artisans come in the second category. The wages paid to them are governed by those paid to the agricultural labourers in the village. The remuneration used to be generally paid in kind but since the War years, payment in cash, partly or wholly, has come very much in vogue. Sometimes, perquisites in the form of mid-day meal, tea or tobacco, varying according to local customs, is also given. Again, wages are paid either on time or on piece basis. The percentage man-days of men, women and child labourers paid under different modes of wage payment would be found in the following table :

TABLE 198

Zones and States 1	Time Rates 2	Piece Rates 3	Cash 4	Kind 5	Cash & Kind 6	With Perquisites 7	Without Perquisites 8
NORTH INDIA	97.9	2.1	56.1	35.5	8.4	62.2	37.8
Uttar Pradesh	97.9	2.1	56.1	35.5	8.4	62.2	37.8
EAST INDIA	88.7	11.3	50.1	42.5	7.4	50.9	49.1
Assam	100.0	..	96.4	0.5	3.1	42.0	58.0
Bihar	83.2	16.8	41.9	54.6	3.5	42.1	57.9
Orissa	96.9	3.3	41.9	37.6	20.5	9.2	90.8
West Bengal	96.7	3.3	81.6	13.1	5.3	84.4	15.6
SOUTH INDIA	97.6	2.4	65.9	21.4	12.7	30.5	69.5
Madras	98.2	1.8	65.9	21.7	12.4	28.4	71.6
Mysore	100.0	..	65.5	15.9	18.6	31.0	69.0
Travancore-Cochin	93.0	7.0	65.6	23.3	11.1	44.1	55.9
WEST INDIA	98.8	1.2	75.8	18.2	6.0	21.1	78.9
Bombay	99.4	0.6	75.2	19.3	5.5	18.0	82.0
Saurashtra	92.8	7.2	86.3	12.4	1.3	43.7	56.3
CENTRAL INDIA	94.0	6.0	46.2	42.6	11.2	1.7	98.3
Madhya Pradesh	87.9	12.1	37.6	53.0	9.4	0.4	99.6
Madhya Bharat	97.2	2.8	77.4	16.7	5.9	4.8	95.2
Hyderabad	100.0	..	50.0	33.3	16.7	0.7	99.3
NORTH-WEST INDIA	99.4	0.6	78.8	13.1	8.1	21.6	78.4
Punjab	97.4	2.6	35.2	32.1	32.7	29.3	70.7
Rajasthan	100.0	..	92.0	4.8	3.2	12.9	87.1
PEPSU	95.0	5.0	69.6	19.9	10.5	64.6	35.4
Jammu & Kashmir	100.0	..	96.4	2.2	1.4	98.1	1.9
ALL INDIA	94.5	5.5	57.7	32.2	10.1	33.4	66.6

It follows that out of the total number of man-days put in by casual agricultural workers of all types, men contribute 62 per cent, women 35 per cent and children 3 per cent. Casual workers, forming 85 per cent of the total number of agricultural workers, are all employed on daily wages. The rate of wages depends on the type of agricultural operation they perform. Of the total man-days put in by casual agricultural labourers, only 5.5 per cent are paid at piece-rate. While time wages are paid for most of the agricultural operations, piece-rates paid are usually confined to a few operations, like embanking, harvesting and to a small extent weeding. Piece-rate may also be applied wherever work has to be done expeditiously. The proportion of man-days paid according to piece-rate is only one per cent in West India and North-West India, about 2 per cent in North and South India and 6 per cent in Central India and it is highest in East India, 11 per cent of man-days being paid for on this basis. Among the States in East India, the man-days under piece-wage form only 3 per cent in West Bengal and Orissa, but in Bihar the proportion is as high as 17 per cent. Likewise in Central India, the zonal average is influenced by the proportion for Madhya Pradesh where 12 per cent of man-days are paid under the piece-wage system.

Customary Wages Replaced By Cash Payment

One significant fact revealed by the Agricultural Labour Enquiry is that in the War and post-War years, customary farm wages have increasingly been replaced by cash payment. The table shows that of the total wage-employment in agriculture in India, 57.7 per cent of man-days are paid in cash and 32.2 per cent in kind, the balance of man-days being paid partly in cash and partly in kind. In North-West India and West India, cash payment accounts for 79 and 76 per cent of man-days. In South India too, the proportion is high (66). In Central and East India, however, cash wages are not so important, being paid only for 46 per cent and 50 per cent of man-days, respectively. The mixed system accounts for a little over 10 per cent of total man-days in Central and South India. The predominance of wages in kind in East India is mainly due to the State of Bihar where wages for 55 per cent of man-days are paid in kind. In sharp contrast, in Assam and West Bengal which are also in this Zone, cash predominates overwhelmingly to the extent of 96 per cent and 82 per cent of man-days, respectively. Likewise in Central India, the importance of kind payment to the extent of 43 per cent is mainly due to Madhya Pradesh where 53 per cent of man-days is paid in kind. Among the other States, where kind wages are relatively more important, are Hyderabad (33 per cent), Orissa (37 per cent), Punjab (32 per cent) and Uttar Pradesh (35.5 per cent).

Among the States, while in Orissa and Bihar cash payment accounts for about 42 per cent of man-days, the proportions in respect of West Bengal and Assam are 82 and 96 per cent, respectively. It may be noted that Assam has greater sown area under commercial crops. In West India, cash payment is important in Saurashtra (86 per cent) and Bombay (75 per cent). That commercial crops encourage the cash system is proved by Hyderabad, which has a large percentage of sown area (30) under commercial crops; a striking example is that of the cotton-*jowar* zone of Madhya Padesh where 67 per cent of man-days are paid in cash while in the cotton and wheat growing tracts in the same State, wages are still largely paid in kind. Madhya Bharat, where the important commercial crops are sugarcane, cotton and oil seeds, is another example. In the Punjab, cash and kind payments are of about equal importance, and the prevalence of payment in kind may be attributed to special factors, e.g., (1) the big and medium cultivators employ mostly attached workers and casual workers get only occasional employment; (2) small cultivators employing casual labourers during rush periods normally pay in the form of mid-day meals; and (3) wages for work relating to harvesting on which most of the casual labour is employed are often paid in kind.

Thus, while the working and living conditions of the agricultural labourers vary, their general standard is low. Their condition is, indeed, appalling. Their housing conditions are wretched, their diet inadequate and ill-balanced. Diseases, endemic and epidemic, affect them first, and they often loose several days of work and their efficiency is lowered. Before 1947 there was no labour legislation to protect and safeguard them. Nor had they any organisation. The average agricultural labourer is not only unemployed for a considerable part of the year, but even during the employment period of the year the wages paid are low. During the War years his wages did rise but the general level of prices made that increase only so-called.

Fixation Of Minimum Wages

Rates of minimum wages for agricultural workers have upto the end of 1953 been fixed in 14 out of the 29 States to which the Act has been applied. It may, however, be noted that no action is called for in the State of Manipur and Andaman and Nicobar Islands as the number of agricultural workers in each of these States is less than 1,000. Among the other States, the minimum rates of wages have been fixed, upto the end of 1953, for the whole State in the States of Ajmer, Bilaspur, Coorg, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Kutch, PEPSU, Punjab, Rajasthan and Tripura, while in the States of Assam, Bihar, Bombay, Mysore, Uttar Pradesh, Vindhya Pradesh and West Bengal, minimum wages have been fixed in certain areas. The following table shows the minimum wage rates for important occupations in agriculture[1]:

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[1] **Report on the working of the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, for the period from March 1948 to 31st December 1953.** Government of India, Ministry of Labour, Labour Bureau, 1955.

TABLE 199

State	Ploughing Rs. As. P.	Sowing Rs. As. P.	Trans-planting Rs. As. P.	Weeding Rs. As. P.	Wage rates for Children Rs. As. P.
Ajmer	1 0 0	1 0 0	0 12 0	0 12 0	
Bihar	1 Sr. 12 Ch. to 1 Sr. 14 Ch. of rice or wheat and ½ Sr *Satoo*		2 Srs. 3 Ch. to 2 Srs. 6 Ch. of rice or wheat and 10 Ch. *Satoo*	Same as for Ploughing and Sowing	..
Bilaspur	1 8 0	1 8 0	1 8 0	1 8 0	0 10 0
Bombay	1 0 0	1 0 0	0 12 0	0 12 0	0 8 0
Coorg	1 5 0	1 5 0	1 5 0	1 5 0	0 10 6
Delhi	2 0 0	2 0 0	1 8 0	1 8 0	..
Kutch	..	0 12 0	0 12 0	0 12 0	0 5 0
Punjab	1 8 0 to 2 8 0	1 8 0 to 2 8 0	1 0 0 (Per *Kanal*)	1 0 0 to 1 8 0	..
Rajasthan	1 4 0	1 4 0	1 4 0	1 4 0	0 10 0
Tripura	2 0 0	2 0 0	2 0 0	2 0 0	..
Uttar Pradesh	1 0 0	1 0 0	1 0 0	1 0 0	0 10 0
West Bengal	..	Rs. 1-8-0 to Rs. 2-4-0 per day in different localities			0 14 0 to 1 4 0

The wages got by the agricultural workers are depressed by the petty cultivators of uneconomic fragmented holdings who are only too willing to work for wages in order to supplement their meagre income from land. The fragmented, tiny holdings, the curse of our agricultural production, thus have the effect of further lowering the living standards of our agricultural wage earners.

The facts of widespread unemployment, low wages and poor standard of living among agricultural labourers were already known in a general way before the Agricultural Labour Enquiry was conducted. The data collected through the Agricultural Labour Enquiry, however, lend a quantitative content to our understanding of the magnitude of these problems and also give an idea about the variations in their incidence on the sections of this class living in different regions. Indeed, the Agricultural Labour Enquiry, divided into the General Village, General Family and Intensive Family Surveys, has been regarded as the largest in Asia. We will briefly review the findings for two of our most depressed regions.

Agricultural Labour Conditions In South India

Let us first view the finding of the Intensive Family Survey in South India. In all 128 villages, of which 84 were in Madras, 24 in Mysore, 16 in Travancore-Cochin and 4 in Coorg, were selected. The number of agricultural labour families covered by this Survey was 2,224 in the entire zone. It was 1,535 in Madras, 365 in Mysore, 284 in Travancore-Cochin and 40 in Coorg.

Taking all adult male agricultural labourers together, Travancore-Cochin recorded the highest average employment, i.e., 185 days and Mysore and Coorg the lowest, i.e., 130 days each, while the figure for Madras was 159 days, so far as employment in agricultural labour was concerned. As regards employment in non-agricultural labour, there was not much variation in the average annual employment in Madras, Mysore and Travancore-Cochin, the figures ranging between 19 days in Madras to 30 days in Travancore-Cochin. Coorg was, however, an exception; the average annual employment in non-agricultural labour there was as high as 101 days.

Unemployment among workers was the highest in South India, being 115 days per worker per year as against about 82 days for the country as a whole. Madras had the largest number of days of unemployment of adult male workers (116 days), Travancore-Cochin 108 days, Coorg 91 days and Mysore the lowest (65 days). Want of work was the main cause of unemployment.

South India also had the lowest average annual income per agricultural labour family, it being Rs. 382, as against the All India average of Rs. 447. State-wise it was Rs. 365—the lowest—for Madras, Rs. 396 for Mysore, Rs. 541 for Travancore-Cochin and Rs. 645—the highest—for Coorg.

The major source of income was wages from agricultural labour in all States except in Coorg. This was due to the availability in Coorg of non-agricultural employment opportunities in plantations, etc., on higher wages.

The per capita income of the zone as a whole was only Rs. 91 as against the all-India figure of Rs. 104. The per capita income was Rs. 87—the lowest—in Madras, Rs. 92 in Mysore, Rs. 113 in Travancore-Cochin and Rs. 137—the highest—in Coorg. As against the average annual income of Rs. 382 per agricultural labour family, the annual expenditure was Rs. 397 (excluding Rs. 6 on account of ceremonies). Expenditure on food formed the bulk, accounting for as much as Rs. 323 or 81.3 per cent of the total income. State-wise the consumption expenditure per family was Rs. 379—the lowest—in Madras, Rs. 429 in Mysore, Rs. 540 in Travancore-Cochin and Rs. 666—the highest—in Coorg.

The per capita expenditure worked out to Rs. 95 as against the per capita income of Rs. 91 for the zone as a whole. It was Rs. 90 in Madras, Rs. 100 in Mysore, Rs. 113 in Travancore-Cochin and Rs. 142 in Coorg.

The Report reveals that 52 per cent of the agricultural labour families in South India, as against 45 per cent in the country as a whole, were in debt, the average debt per indebted family being Rs. 102 as against the All India average of Rs. 105. The percentage of indebted families was the highest in Coorg (82.5 per cent) with an average debt of Rs. 110 per indebted family. In Mysore the percentage of indebted families was 77.1 with an average debt of Rs. 253; in Travancore-Cochin it was 54 with an average debt of Rs. 39; and in Madras it was 48.9 with an average debt of Rs. 84.

In most cases, the purpose of debt was to meet consumption expenditure. The source of borrowing was generally friends and relatives, employers and shopkeepers, and to some extent, moneylenders.

Agricultural Labour Conditions In Central India

Now a look at Central India. The average annual income per agricultural labour family in Central India was Rs. 417 as against the All India annual average of Rs. 447, according to the Intensive Family Survey. The highest average income of Rs. 464 was in Bhopal and the lowest of Rs. 378 was in Vindhya Pradesh. It was Rs. 445 in Hyderabad, Rs. 399 in Madhya Bharat and Rs. 390 in Madhya Pradesh.

Income from agricultural wages comprised 65.7 per cent of the total income of an average agricultural labour family, the share of non-agricultural wages being 7.2 per cent. Income from cultivation of land was 13 per cent and from other sources it amounted to 14.1 per cent.

The Report points out that about 55 per cent of agricultural labour families are found to be in debt as against the overall record of 45 per cent. The Report observes that the percentage of indebted families is higher in Central India than in other zones except in North-West India. Employers, moneylenders, friends and relatives play a prominent role in advancing loans to agricultural workers while the part played by co-operatives and shop-keepers is insignificant.

The percentage of female workers was the highest in Central India, namely, 56 as against 37 for men. The preponderance of women workers in this zone, says the Inquiry Report, appears primarily due to economic factors since the wage level was relatively lower here. A woman worker was employed for 141 days during the year, 125 days in agricultural labour and 16 days in non-agricultural work. The employment of women workers was the highest in Vindhya Pradesh and the lowest in Bhopal while in the State of Madhya Pradesh, Madhya Bharat and Hyderabad it varied between 122 to 159 days. The bulk of man-days contributed by women was the highest in this zone, namely, 50 per cent as against 45 per cent for men. In the States of Madhya Pradesh, Madhya Bharat and Vindhya Pradesh, the percentage of man-days worked by men was greater than that of women, the respective percentages being 5, 25, and 551 as against 4, 24, and 144, respectively for women, while in Hyderabad and Bhopal the case was the reverse and the percentage of man-days worked by women exceeded that of men, the respective percentages being 61 and 53 as against 34 and 39 in the case of men.

The average annual per capita income for Central India was Rs. 91 as against an All India average of Rs. 104. It was the highest in Bhopal being Rs. 105 and the lowest in Vindhya Pradesh being Rs. 82. The average annual per capita income in the States of Madhya Pradesh, Hyderabad and Madhya Bharat was found to be Rs. 87, 97 and 83, respectively.

The average annual expenditure of an agricultural labour family worked out at Rs. 428 in this zone. With the exception of East India zone, the percentage of expenditure incurred on food was the highest, that is, 87.4 per cent of the total expenditure as against 85.3 per cent of All India.

The Planning Commission On Agricultural Workers

The Planning Commission had taken note of the magnitude of the problem of agricultural labourers and in their First Five-Year Plan they stated that "the existence of large number of agricultural workers, who lack sustained employment and frequently suffer from social handicaps, is to be regarded as a source of serious weakness and even of instability in the present agrarian system." They were also aware of the fact that an agricultural labourer as agricultural labourer could not expect to benefit much from the land and tenancy reforms going on in the country and that, on the other hand, "reduction in the larger farms which has been in progress in consequence of tenancy legislation leads to a diminution in the amount of employment which may be available." They felt that "the economic condition of the agricultural workers depends upon the state of prosperity in the agricultural economy" and that various programmes under the Five-Year Plan, which aimed at increasing agricultural production substantially, would by enlarging the opportunities of employment in agriculture indirectly help the agricultural labourer. Further, they expected that the programmes relating to organised and small-scale and village industries included in the Plan would, by drawing away a part of the labour force seeking jobs in agriculture, indirectly help the agricultural labourers. The First Five-Year Plan also suggested that "Agricultural labour populations are concentrated most in areas where population presses heavily on the land and the development in sectors of the economy other than the agricultural has been retarded. By selecting such areas for special programmes, such as, Community Development Projects, it should be possible to make a distinct contribution to the problem of rehabilitating agricultural labourers, for increase in the tempo of development is the effective answer to the problem of unemployment and under-employment". The Plan contained a special reference to the State Government's programmes for the amelioration of backward classes and the Central Government's provision under Section 275 (1) of the Constitution for the welfare of scheduled castes and other backward classes as well as scheduled tribes and scheduled areas. In addition to these programmes for direct and indirect assistance to the agricultural labourers, the Plan made the following suggestions for improving the economic condition of the agricultural labourers :

(i) fixation of minimum wages in low-wage pockets and intensive development areas;
(ii) conferment of occupancy rights on the landless workers in regard to house sites;
(iii) organisation of labour co-operatives; and
(iv) resettlement schemes for landless workers (for this specific provision of Rs. 2.0 crores—later reduced to Rs. 1.5 crores—was made in the First Five-Year Plan).

In discussions on the frame-work of the Second Five-Year Plan, even greater emphasis has been placed on the need for special attention to the agricultural labour class in the Second Five-Year Plan. This emphasis naturally follows from the two basic objectives of (i) fuller employment and (ii) a larger measure of social justice which have been accepted for the Second Plan. In para 25 of their Note on "Basic Considerations", the Panel of Economists of the Planning Commission have pointed out that "the other important problem is one of organising the supply of labour for whom jobs are to be found in the Second Five-Year Plan period....There is also a further fact, so glaringly revealed by the findings of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry and the National Sample Survey rounds that large sections of the working force in rural areas obtain either wages or incomes much below the national average; and social justice demands that this class which in a way is the most exploited class in the country, is given the first chance to improve its condition when new jobs are being created in the country. Moreover, the incidence of distribution of this class is unevenly spread over different parts of the country and social justice demands that special attention is directed to what may be called the distressed areas in the country as distinguished from other areas which are better off, though in absolute terms their condition is no matter for satisfaction either."

Effects Of Land Reforms On Agricultural Workers

The problem is mainly of a depressed agricultural economy in all the rural areas in general although it has assumed almost distress proportions in certain areas of the country which are not evenly spread over all the States. It is also now recognised that the problem is not merely one of securing distributive justice to agricultural labourers. Fixation of minimum wages as a State policy in India is desirable for several reasons, among which the most important is that it serves to indicate the State's anxiety to protect this class from undue exploitation. But it must be admitted that in the present depressed state of the agricultural industry as a whole, mere fixation of minimum wages cannot play a very important role in improving the economic condition of agricultural labourers. For this industry as it stands today has not got the capacity to pay much higher wages than are paid. Most of the agriculturists have small holdings and eke out a bare existence. There is, therefore, not much scope for re-distribution of income as between these two classes. Moreover, as stated in the First Five-Year Plan, as our attempts to re-organise the rights of ownership in land succeed, the opportunities for hired employment on land are likely to decline. This possibility is strongly supported by some data collected during the Agricultural Labour Enquiry. The two important States, where peasant proprietorship preponderated as a system of land holding in the pre-reform days, were Punjab and Bombay, included respectively in North-West Indian and West Indian zones of the Enquiry. The following table gives the man-days worked per gross sown acre by agricultural labour in the various zones :

TABLE 200

Zones	Man-days worked per acre of gross sown area	Zones	Man-days worked per acre of gross sown area
North India	11.3	West India	7.2
East India	26 1	Central India	19.2
South India	39.0	North-West India	4.2

The wide differences indicated by these figures are significant. It is in North-West India and West India that agricultural labour found least employment per gross sown acre : 4.2 man-days in North-West India and 7.2 man-days in West India as against the All India average of 19 man-days and 26.1 man-days in East India and 39.0 man-days in South India. The experience of Jammu Province of Jammu and Kashmir State, where unemployment has increased among this class owing to the resettlement of self-cultivating refugees on small holdings in place of former peasants with larger holdings who have migrated to Pakistan, points in the same direction. It appears that we have to face upto the fact that though our land reform programmes would help a number of actual cultivators and also some families belonging to the agricultural labour class who cultivate to a certain extent on their own some land mostly taken on lease, it would almost certainly lead to a decline in the opportunities for the employment of other hired labour in agriculture.

Economic Subservience Accompanied By Social Subordination

Thus, the condition of our agricultural labourers is really terrible. When we think of uplifting our villages and giving them self-rule, this predominating factor of our rural life has constantly to be borne in mind. These agricultural workers are the first to be hit by any calamity, natural or otherwise. They have nothing to fall back upon and are helpless victims of misfortunes, which they cannot avert.

The agricultural labourer is not infrequently compelled, in times of stress, to mortgage his personal liberty. In return for a small sum of money which he may happen to need at the moment, he agrees to serve the man from whom he has borrowed. The money is not paid nor is it intended to be repaid, but the former remains a life-long bond slave of his creditor. For this work he merely receives an inadequate dole of food and to all intents and purposes is in the position of a mediaeval serf.

It is a fact, though deplorable, that most of our middle and richer peasants, and even small peasants, have come to look upon themselves as superior to the landless labourer, who, to make matters worse, belongs to so-called lower castes. Thus, economic subservience is also accompanied by social subordination.

Size Distribution Of Holdings: The Relentless Pressure On Land

To complete our picture of Indian villages today we have also to bear in mind the size distribution of agricultural holdings. In Book II, in the various State chapters, we have attempted to muster information available for each State regarding the sizes of agricultural holdings. Everywhere the picture revealed is one of serious mal-distribution. The overwhelming majority of the cultivating population possesses uneconomic units, and among the uneconomic holders the overwhelming number is of persons cultivating one acre and less and between 1 and 2.5 acres.

The relentless and increasing pressure on land has led to two inevitable consequences, i.e., that of fragmentation and sub-division of land and the swelling of the class of agricultural labour. The fact is that the per capita land is decreasing and similarly it is true for per capita typographically usable land. This will be evident from the following table[1] which gives population growth and per capita land :

TABLE 201

Census year	Percentage growth of population: Over previous Census	Percentage growth of population: Over 1921	Per capita land (acres)	Per capita typographically usable land (acres)
1921			3.0	2.0
1931	11.0	11.0	2.7	1.8
1941	14.3	26.1	2.4	1.6
1951	13.1	43.8	2.1	1.4

There has been a tremendous increase in the population with the net result that not only the total land per capita but also the proportion of cultivated land per capita has been shrinking in size. It has also been noticed in the studies made by the Census Commissioner that the percentage of per capita irrigated land and double-cropped area is steadily going down. This clearly shows that due to increase in the population the pressure on land is increasing more and more.

Average Size Of Cultivator's Holdings In Different Zones

Another related problem is the nature of holdings. The following table[2] gives the average size of the cultivators' holdings in the different Census zones :

TABLE 202

Zone	Average size (Acres)
North India	5.3
East India	4.5
South India	4.5
West India	12.3
Central India	12.2
North-West India	12.6
All India average	7.5

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[1] It is estimated that 95 per cent of the superficial area of land in mountain tracts, 75 per cent in the hilly tracts, 25 per cent in plateaus, and 5 per cent in the plains should be written off for arriving at typographically usable land. **(Census Report, 1951).**

[2] Source : **Agricultural Labour—How They Work and Live**, Ministry of Labour, Government of India.

The average size of the holdings was the lowest in the Southern and Eastern Zones, being in each case 4.5 acres. These are mostly rice growing areas with a comparatively high percentage of irrigated and double sown land. In East India, which is a rice area, the average size varied from 5.3 acres in Assam to 4.1 acres in Bihar, and 4.7 acres in West Bengal. The average size in Madras was very near the zonal average for South India, being 4.5 acres; it was the lowest (2.4 acres) in Travancore-Cochin which is the most densely populated State in the Indian Union. In Northern Zone comprising U.P., which is both a rice and wheat growing tract, the average size was slightly higher being 5.3 acres. In all other three zones, the North-West, West and Central, the average size was uniformly high, being a little above 12 acres.

Land Concentration In Different States: Figures Of The Planning Commission And Agricultural Labour Enquiry

We would like it to be borne in mind that this average of 7.5 acres must be treated as an average, and should be viewed in the light of land concentration which obtains in India. If each cultivator in India has a holding of 7.5 acres, there would be hardly much to complain about, for in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and the deltaic areas of Tanjore, etc., in fact, in numerous other vast fertile tracts of India, a 7.5 acre holding would be more than the size of an economic holding and its cultivator would be, in current terms, a 'well-off' man. The real picture, however, is vastly different. Table 203[1] (p. 703) gives a picture of land concentration in different States of India.

Thus, in Uttar Pradesh about 81 per cent of the landholders possessed less than 5 acres of land per head and, on the whole, occupied only about 39 per cent of the holding area. At the same time, a bare 0.9 per cent of the holdings were about 25 acres and occupied 12.9 per cent of the area. More or less a similar situation obtained in other States. In Bombay, about 9 per cent of the total holders possessed more than 41 per cent of the area. In Madhya Pradesh about 14 per cent of the landlords occupied 59 per cent of the total land. The findings of the Aricultural Labour Enquiry on the size of cultivated holdings in India would be found in the Table 204[2] (p. 704).

According to this table, roughly 59 per cent of cultivators cultivate less than 5 acres per head, but cover only 15.5 per cent of the total cultivated area. On the other hand, as much as 34 per cent of the cultivated area is under cultivation by 5.6 per cent of the culti-

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[1] The First Five-Year Plan, Chapter XII, Annexure.

[2] Agricultural Labour—How They Work and Live, Op. cit.

TABLE 203

State	Percentage of ownership holdings below 5 acres	Percentage of area covered by holdings below 5 acres	Percentage of ownership holdings over 25 acres	Percentage of area covered by holdings above 25 acres
Uttar Pradesh	81.2	38.8	0.9	12.9
Bombay	52.3	14.0	8.6	41.3
Madhya Pradesh	51.5	10.0	14.1 (over 20 acres)	59.4
Orissa	74.2	30.1	3.4 (over 20 acres)	27.1
Bihar	83.3	N.A.	3.0 (over 30 acres)	N.A.
Assam	66.1	26.0	11.4 (over 10 acres)	41.4
Mysore	66.2	25.3	1.2 (over 50 acres)	15.7
Travancore-Cochin	94.1	44.0	0.5 (over 25 acres)	27.0
PEPSU	45.4	8.2	16.7 (over 20 acres)	44.7
Himachal Pradesh	95.0	71.0	0.1 (over 15 acres)	8.0
Coorg	76.0	30.0	4.0 (over 25 acres)	42.0

vators who have more than 25 acres. This same publication gives further break up of size distribution of holdings into lower units as indicated in Table 205 (p. 704).

Thus, 16.8 per cent holdings were up to 1 acre and occupied a bare 1 per cent of the total area. And 38.1 per cent of the holdings were up to 2.5 acres but occupied only 5.6 per cent of the area. On the other hand, a bare 1.4 per cent of the holdings were above 50 acres but occupied 15.4 per cent of the total area.

The Story Of A Land Census

The difference in the size distribution of holdings as given by the First Five-Year Plan and the Agricultural Labour Enquiry would be noticed by the reader. The Agricultural Labour Enquiry reveals a better position than the one presented by the First Five-Year Plan. In the latter only about 59 per cent of the holdings are shown below 5 acres, while in the former the average for India will work out to a higher figure. These differences, however, yet

TABLE 204

State	Percentage of cultivated holdings below 5 acres	Percentage of area covered by cultivated holdings below 5 acres	Percentage or cultivated holdings above 25 acres	Percentage of area covered by cultivated holdings above 25 acres
Uttar Pradesh	66.1	26.4	1.9	16.6
Assam	62.0	N.A.	N.A.	3.4
Bihar	77.0	31.8	1.6	19.1
Orissa	72.2	25.3	2.4	31.0
West Bengal	66.5	31.5	1.2	9.3
Madras	74.5	30.4	1.9	20.0
Mysore	54.9	19.8	4.3	23.6
Travancore-Cochin	88.1	42.4	0.6	13.8
Bombay	48.3	9.7	8.0	38.1
Saurashtra	4.8	N.A.	48.2	74.6
Madhya Pradesh	37.4	6.6	14.1	51.6
Madhya Bharat	31.0	6.5	10.8	37.2
Hyderabad	36.0	5.2	16.0	53.1
Rajasthan	25.6	1.3	19.7	56.2
Punjab	23.0	N.A.	9.0	26.0
PEPSU	17.9	3.3	16.4	42.6
Jammu and Kashmir	74.8	45.0	0.3	2.2
ALL INDIA	59.1	15.5	5.6	34.4

TABLE 205

Size of holdings (Acres)	As percentage of the total number	As percentage of the total area
Up to 1	16.8	1.0
1.1 to 2.5	21.3	4.6
2.6 to 5.0	21.0	9.9
5.1 to 10.0	19.1	17.6
10.1 to 25.0	16.2	32.5
25.1 to 50.0	4.2	19.0
Above 50	1.4	15.4
TOTAL	100.0	100.0

reveal the mal-distribution of land. The opportunity for a scientific All India comparison, which would have proved of immense value to all students of India's agrarian economy, came up when the Land Reforms Division of the Planning Commission undertook a Land Census as early as 1953. This Census, however, left much to be desired for. Expected to be completed by end of 1953, it tortuously dragged on even after 1955, and the full data are not yet available. Inefficient direction by the Division at the Centre, and bureaucratic delays and obstructions at the State levels deprived much of the value of this rather costly venture. For example, for unexplained reasons, the Census was confined to holdings of 10 acres and above in the States of Punjab, Mysore, PEPSU, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Vindhya Pradesh, Coorg, etc., which, in effect, excluded on a rough estimate more than 70 to 80 per cent of the holdings. This unimaginative exclusion can only be regretted. In those States, however, where holdings below 10 acres were also enumerated, e.g., Andhra, Bombay, Madhya Pradesh, Madras, Hyderabad, Madhya Bharat, Saurashtra, etc., a disconcerting picture has been revealed.

The Rural Credit Survey On Agricultural Holdings

The Rural Credit Survey of the Reserve Bank of India has submitted some valuable information on the subject. As early as December 1954, Prof. D. R. Gadgil said at the Fifteenth Conference of the Indian Society of Agricultural Economics that 30 per cent of the landholders held more than 50 per cent of the land in almost all the 75 districts covered, and that in 48 districts they held more than 60 per cent. The Rural Credit Survey data relate to 600 villages selected in the 75 districts. The cultivators were arranged for the purpose in order of the size of their cultivated holdings. When so arranged, it was found that the first 10 per cent of the cultivators held more than 25 per cent of the total land surface in all the districts and held more than 30 per cent of it in 51 of the 75 districts. The first 30 per cent or 3 deciles taken together held more than 50 per cent of the land in almost all districts, and in 48 districts they held more than 60 per cent; in no district was this proportion larger than 85, but in 6 it varied between 75 and 85 per cent. The middle four deciles held between 25 and 35 per cent of the total cultivated land in the large majority of districts. The holdings of the last 3 deciles included less than 10 per cent of the total cultivated land in the majority of the districts, but in 27 of the 75 districts they held between 10 and 15 per cent.

Results Of The National Sample Survey (viiith Round)

The latest, and probably the most authoritative, picture of the position of land distribution in India is provided by the National Sample Survey (VIIIth Round). The size and distribution of holdings as given by this survey would be found in the following table which gives cumulative percentage distribution of estimated number of households and of total area owned|operated by size-level of household ownership holdings :

TABLE 206

Size-level	Percentage area owned		Percentage area cultivated	
	Household	Area	Household	Area
1	2	3	4	5
0.00 ..	22	..	6	0
1.00 ..	47	1	40	1
2.50 ..	61	6	54	5
5.00 ..	75	16	70	16
7.50 ..	83	26	79	27
10.00 ..	88	35	85	36
15.00 ..	93	48	91	49
20.00 ..	96	58	94	60
25.00 ..	97	63	96	67
30.00 ..	98	71	97	73
50.00 ..	99	84	99	86
Above 50.00 ..	100	100	100	100

The data contained in columns 2 and 3 of this table show glaring disparities in land ownership. 22 per cent rural families do not own any land. Another 53 per cent families who own less than 5 acres each held only 16 per cent of the total area, 24 per cent families who held between 5 and 50 acres each own 68 per cent of the area. Only one per cent families own more than 50 acres but they hold 16 per cent of the total area.

With regard to the pattern of cultivation, the data in columns 4 and 5 also show marked variations. Not less than 34 per cent families cultivate less than one acre each, 64 per cent families less than 5 acres each and held 16 per cent of the total area. One per cent families cultivate more than 50 acres each and held 14 per cent of the total area.

Rural Inequalities: A Threat To Panchayat Democracy

Such are our Indian villages, a picture of dire poverty, acute under-nourishment and semi-starvation, full of inequalities, where we have launched the biggest experiment in direct rural democracy which the world has witnessed. For the success of the Panchayat experiment, this picture has constantly to be borne in mind and all steps to be related to this reality of the situation. Not to bear it in mind, but to ignore the inequalities that obtain would mean certain failure of the Panchayat experiment. Panchayat democracy cannot thrive in an atmosphere surcharged with tension, with daily conflicts between the wage-earners and their employers, between the petty holders and the substantial ones. And to these conflicts in the Panchayats we shall now turn our attention.

CHAPTER XXXV

PANCHAYATS AND VILLAGE CONFLICTS

"It seems to me that in this age, our conceptions of social relations and national and international affairs must necessarily undergo a change....There is undoubtedly today what is called class conflict. But it is out of date. I realise that many things that are out of date continue to exist and we have even to fight against them. But the fact remains that we have to consider these questions in a new context and try to adopt ourselves to this. This means that the basic reasons....must disappear and that where there is such a conflict, there should be a fair and impartial method of resolving it peacefully."[1]

—*JAWAHARLAL NEHRU*

"Each individual has his self-love. Therefore, his brute instinct leads him to fight with others in the sole pursuit of his self-interest. But man has also his higher instincts of sympathy and mutual help. The people who are lacking in this higher moral power and who, therefore, cannot combine in fellowship with one another must perish or live in a state of degradation. Only those peoples have survived and achieved civilization who have this spirit of co-operation strong in them. So we find that from the beginning of history, men had to choose between fighting with one another and combining, between serving their own interest or the common interest of all."[2]

—*RABINDRANATH TAGORE*

"Overcome anger by loving kindness, evil by good. Overcome the miser by generosity, and the liar by truth."[3]

—*BUDDHA*

COMMENTING on the Barabanki murders of two Uttar Pradesh M.L.A.s, New Delhi's esteemed *Hindustan Times* wrote :[4] "The ancestors of quite a few big landlords were those who practised outlawry and later settled down under British rule as acknowledged leaders of the countryside. The temptation to revive the old profession is great at a time when zamindari has been abolished and elections to Panchayats, local bodies and legislatures provide the excuse for mobilising caste groups and goonda elements."

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[1] From message to Eighth Annual Convention of Indian National Trade Union Congress at Surat on May 16, 1956.

[2] From essay on 'Nationalism.'

[3] अक्कोधेन जिने कोधं असाधुं साधुना जिने ।
जिने कदरियं दानेन सच्चेन अलिकवादिनं ॥

[4] **Hindustan Times**, 22.10.'55. See leading article entitled "The Barabanki Outrage." New Delhi's another esteemed daily, **The Statesman**, wrote in a similar strain: "The uprooting of zamindari has projected into the political arena people both frustrated and determined......Some of these districts are full of arms legitimately kept under the omnibus licences which were traditionally granted to the privileged community of big landholders." (See editorial entitled "The Barabanki Murders," dated 21.10.'55).

The Barabanki Murders

The Barabanki murders, in fact, underline, as nothing else does, the conflicts that currently prevail in our countryside, and a brief account of the episode would be relevant for our discussion. In September 1955, a Congress M.L.A., Shri Bhagwati Prasad Shukla, was murdered by unknown assasins while he was cycling to the District Court. Of this event, and the subsequent enquiries, we have hardly any information. A flood of light, however, has been thrown on the murder of a Socialist M.L.A., Mr. Avadh Saran Varma, and his companion Shri Siaram, at village Baddupur in Barabanki district of U.P., in the third week of October 1955. According to the special representative of *The Statesman*[1], "Mr. Avadh Saran Varma was alive when he was tied up to a pole and taken away by the armed mob to a grove about two miles from the scene of the attack and burnt along with the body of Mr. Siaram, the other victim of the Baddupur murders, according to eye-witnesses." The description underlines the intensity of the hatred of the armed party, who were, in point of fact, local ex-zamindars, mostly belonging to the Kshatriya caste, who were not taking kindly to the activities of Shri Avadh Saran and Shri Siaram, who by caste were *kurmis*, traditionally the most efficient cultivators in U.P.'s countryside and, by and large, tenants and agricultural workers. They were attacked when they were addressing a peasant gathering in a village where the Kshatriya landlords regarded their sway and superiority as by God ordained, and could not countenance such 'unruly' demonstrations by their erstwhile tenants and 'inferiors.' Reporting on the Barabanki outrage, the special representative of the *Hindustan Times* said[2]: "The traditional agrarian tension which often follows a sharply divided caste line, is being exploited by the parties, particularly in eastern districts, where pressure on land is extreme." And that, "Elections to Panchayats have accentuated caste rivalry, and caste considerations have been a major consideration in selecting candidates."

The Barabanki violence is thus representative of the new situation in our countryside. And what exactly is the essence of this situation? Simply this, that the high caste authoritarianism of yore can no more work. The implementation of land reforms in particular, and the awakening of the Indian people in post-Independence India in general, have created those conditions when the old hierarchical type of village structure, divided horizontally between a relatively small number of families at the top and a descending range of dependents—the poor petty tenants and agricultural labourers—at the lower rungs, can no more persist. For the top ones too much is at stake, not only their old economic power but also hitherto unquestioned social privileges, the exercise of all political power residing in the villages, their pride of place, etc. Those at the lower rung, strengthened as they have been economically by the abolition of landlordism and conferment of tenancy rights, and aware as they increasingly are of the equal rights granted to them in Republican India, are no more prepared to slave for the high-caste authoritarian as in olden days.

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[1] **The Statesman,** 2.10 '55.
[2] **Hindustan Times,** 24.10.'55.

The New Co-relationship Of Class Forces In Our Countryside

In point of fact, a new co-relationship of class forces is the new pattern in our villages. The landlords have been divested of their erstwhile privileges, but sufficient areas have been left to them for cultivation, and they now come into the category of substantial cultivators, the rich peasants so to say. In former days, the substantial tenant joined hands with the middling and the poor ones, as also the agricultural labourers, to fight against the excesses of the landlords, who, in the great majority of cases, were supported by the British regime—the judiciary, the police, and the hierarchy of revenue officials, from the District Collector down to the Kanungo and the village revenue records-keeper, who in most cases was a veritable villain. Now, in the new set-up of things, the ex-landlord turned into the substantial cultivator, as also the already existing substantial cultivator, both of whom, as coincidence would have it, generally hail from the so-called upper castes, have a common front against the middling and poor cultivators and the agricultural labourers, who generally belong to the so-called lower castes. These latter, however, have and are having as much right over the lands they cultivate as the substantial cultivators, their erstwhile superiors and masters, and are no more prepared to be ordered about, suppressed and treated in the old way.

We have come across a profound observation on this new situation in our villages by Shri Tarlok Singh, Joint Secretary of the National Planning Commission, and a great student of our village affairs by his right. Says Shri Tarlok Singh: "Recent land reforms have tended to reduce inequalities in the ownership of land, but not sufficiently. The old leadership in the village has been losing its position and influence without substantial signs of a new leadership stepping into its place. The institution of caste has less of its social incidence, but it may well be that the economic incidence of castes, being due to lack of independent means of production and lack of alternative opportunity, is being accentuated, especially for the scheduled castes and other backward classes. There appear to be signs of increase in the productivity of land, but scarcely enough to make a large difference to the problems of rural poverty. The economy as a whole has gone forward, but the gap between population and production has not yet noticeably narrowed.

"In this situation, conflicts of interest within the village community have sharpened and the process continues. There are now few values which can be said to be common to the whole community, and certainly there is no common purpose which inspires all the sections equally. Many innovations benefit some, hurt others. As instances, one may cite the landlord's tractor and the electric connection which provides energy to the village entrepreneur's rice and flour mill. Progress and enterprise on the part of some proceed alongside growing poverty for others. The community as such seems to exert little influence on either trend." [1]

These rampant and dormant conflicts in the villages have their full play in the Village Panchayats, in their elections as also in their functioning. We have before us a very large number of newspaper clippings from the daily and the weekly Hindi press of the States of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Bharat, Vindhya Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, etc. We will cite a few of these to illustrate the widespread nature of the conflict.

Conflicts In Uttar Pradesh Panchayats

On March 14, 1954, while the Adalati Panchayat of village Chabli in Agra District was in session, the Panches quarrelled among themselves which culminated in a free *lathi* fight and breaking of heads.[2] The Sarpanch of village Amarpur in Jhansi district was seriously assaulted with *lathis* on August 26, 1954, by some unknown persons as he was proceeding to another village and was admitted to the Civil Hospital in grave condition.[3] Ulfat and Muloo, two kisans of Nagla Sheopur village in the Kampil police circle of Farrukhabad district in U.P., were shot dead by some unknown persons on June 9, 1955, while they were asleep on a *chabootra* in front of their house. Karan, who also sustained gunshot wounds, later succumbed to his injuries in hospital and another man lay in a precarious condition. The three deceased were related to each other and "the cause of the murder is said to be some old enmity over the possession of a plot of land."[1] *Navjeevan,* an esteemed Hindi daily of Lucknow, reported in its issue of 19.6.'55 of the highhandedness and terrorism of ex-zamindars of Faizabad district. "An ex-landlord of Tanda tehsil got the hereditary lands of kisans cultivated by force in villages Hirapur, Jallapur and Sabukpur, with the help of *goondas* and the police." Further, on June 12, 1955, the ex-zamindars attacked with *lathis* a peasant meeting in village Abhari in Faizabad tehsil resulting in injuries to many kisans and kisan leaders. This attack took place even when the police was standing by. A day earlier, on June 11, Sarju Singh, a kisan worker was seriously assaulted by 25 *goondas* as he was proceeding from village Nandlal-Ka-Pura to Chaubepur, and was admitted in a serious condition to the hospital. Again, on December 6, 1955, an agrarian riot took place in village Hakimpur, 28 miles from Allahabad, in which the President and the Vice-President of the Gaon Sabha and a woman working in the field were killed. "The riot was the culmination of long-standing enmity between two groups of villagers. Recently allegations of theft and dacoity were made against one of the groups, about 76 members of which formed a riotous gang. They are alleged to have carried *lathis* and spears and made reckless attacks on members of the other group, killing 3 persons and injuring 25 others. They also looted, it is further alleged, about a dozen houses and took away clothes and ornaments."[2]

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[1] See article entitled "Village Panchayat and the Pattern of Village Development." A.I.C.C. Economic Review, Vol. VII, No. 15, Whole No. 136, dated December 1, 1955.

[2] Panchayat Raj Gazette, (weekly published from Agra), dated 20.3.'54.

[3] Hindustan Times Evening News, 27.8.'54.

Village Conflicts In Bihar

Let us now turn to Bihar. *Aryavarta,* a Hindi daily of Patna, wrote editorially on April 27, 1955 : "Many Gram Panchayats are working ideally and we can have great expectations of them in future, but the same cannot be said of all Gram Panchayats. The establishment of many Gram Panchayats has resulted in worsening the conditions in the village because the race to occupy influential positions in the Gram Panchayats has intensified village factions and quarrels." The paper then goes on to cite certain examples. Bihar, indeed, has traditionally been an area of agrarian tension and the village conflicts there have probably been more tense than elsewhere. According to a report, a *Pasi* of village Dhankaul in Pupri Police Station of Sitamarhi district was beheaded on July 27, 1954, following a dispute about possession.[3] The Bihar papers also report of illegal acts of Panchayat officials and their punishment. Thus, the Panchayat officials of village Bhabanichak in Jehanabad sub-division of district Gaya conspired to get an innocent man hauled up for dacoity, and the Sub-Divisional Officer came to his rescue.[1] According to a report from Daltonganj, the D.S.P. of Palamau district arrested an official and a member of Singasiya Gram Panchayat for involvement in a dacoity.[2] Again, on a written complaint being filed against a village *Mukhiya* of Police Station Nangachia for taking bribes ranging from Rs. 3 to Rs. 10 from flood-affected people in exchange for extending to them flood-relief, the Sub-Divisional Officer ordered an enquiry.[3] On May 23, 1955, one Ramavatar Jayaswal filed a complaint in the court of S.D.O. of Sadar sub-division of district Purnea, against the *Mukhiya* of Barahara Gram Panchayat for beating. The complainant supported the rival of the *Mukhiya* in the Panchayat elections.[4] According to a report from Simmultala, district Monghyr, dated August 5, 1955, S.D.O. Jamui launched a case against a P.S.P. worker Shri Krishna Singh for assaulting the *Mukhiya* of Simmultala Gram Panchayat. The accused's party candidate was defeated in the Panchayat elections.[5] According to another report, there was free fight in Gram Panchayat elections in villages Baro and Khaira of Nawadah sub-division in June 1955, resulting in injuries to about two dozen people, two seriously.[6] According to a message from Rajgir, dated November 10, 1955, one Abdul Ghafoor, *Mukhiya* of Bhui Gram Panchayat was sentenced to a term of 1½ years for illegally registering a plot of land belonging to one Binda Upadhyaya in the name of his brother-in-law Najamuddīn. There are many other reports of conflicts and fights in Panchayat elections.

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[1] **Hindustan Times Evening News, 9.6.'55.**

[2] **Hindustan Times Evening News, 7.12.'55.**

[3] **Rashtravani, A Patna Hindi daily, dated, 20.7.'54.**

According to a message from Chapra, dated June 11, 1955, the upper caste villagers of village Pabheja suddenly attacked the Harijans of the village. The reason was that the Harijans were being stopped from going to public places, which they resisted.[7] Again, on April 24, 1955, members of Islampur Gram Panchayat and Mohanchak Gram Panchayat had a free fight over a dispute regarding fishing rights in a tank[8]. Eight persons were injured.

More serious, however, have been the disputes between the tenants and the ex-landlords or the *Kayami Pattadars* of the abolished Permanent Settlement. We have referred in the Bihar Chapter (Book II) of the murders in Purnea district. Again, according to P.T.I. message from Muzaffarpur, dated August 25, 1955, the police opened fire in Madhipur Hazari village in the district, killing two men, when a crowd attacked them with spears. The police, it is stated, was trying to stop forcible harvesting of jute from land which was under dispute.[1] According to a report from Nawadah, dated January 12, 1956, about 200 agricultural workers left their houses in village Goethadih after a clash between them and farmers over payment of wages. They were living in an open field outside the village, and a police force was rushed. This clash was the second of its kind in the village in the course of a month. According to Shri Keshav Ram, Secretary, Nawadah Backward Classes League, the cause of the trouble was the refusal of the cultivators to pay their agricultural labourers at the prescribed Government rates. He also alleged that some local leaders were preaching casteism and apprehended that this might worsen the situation.[2]

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[1] **Aryavarta,** 11.5.'55.
[2] **Aryavarta,** 28.4.'55.
[3] **Aryavarta,** 7.6.'55.
[4] **Rashtravani,** 25.5.'55.
[5] **Rashtravani,** 7.8.'55.
[6] **Rashtravani,** 28.6.'55.
[7] **Aryavarta,** 15.6.'53.
[8] **Aryavarta,** 1.5.'55.

Indeed, the story of village conflicts in Bihar can be endless and we would rather stop. The expropriated landholders are in no mood to take things lying down, and even Acharya Vinoba Bhave, during his Bihar Bhoodan tour, complained against them. Thus, addressing a prayer meeting at village Hansa near Samastipur in August 1954, Vinoba said that he was grieved to hear that "some zamindars were harassing Bhoodan workers interested in stopping eviction and even dubbing some of them as Communists."[3]

In Rajasthan

Almost an identical picture is seen in Rajasthan. The former jagirdars and others with vested interests in land are doing their best to remain supreme in the villages and did their best to capture Village Panchayats in the elections last year. The Rajasthan dailies and weeklies (in Hindi), quite numerous and well-edited, abound in stories of excesses of ex-jagirdars, and their high-handedness in Panchayats captured by them. According to the weekly *Marwar Sandesh*, (dated 25.8.'55), jagirdar Abhay Singh of district Pali forcibly took away lands from longstanding tenants and converted them into his farm. All efforts made by the peasants to get redress from high authorities are defeated by the jagirdar. Village folks who tend to sympathise with the ejected peasants are threatened with murder and other dire consequences. Such stories can be multiplied. According to another message, on being defeated in Panchayat elections, the jagirdars committed a most heinous crime in Khavaspura village of Jodhpur district. To avenge their defeat, the jagirdars cut the nose and ears of Shri Sukhdeo, the President of Khavaspura Village Congress Committee and of Shri Bacharam, an elected Panch, and also extracted an eye of one of them.[1] Another esteemed daily of Rajasthan has reported widespread efforts of former feudal landowners to act highhandedly and illegally in Panchayat elections and capture them. The incidents, into the details of which we need not go, relate to villages Panditjee-Ki-Gharni, Purala, Bairoo, Keroo, Banar, Gangano, Lorari, Nevra, Cherai, Bhikamkaur, etc., in Marwar (Jodhpur). Says the correspondent : "In the Marwar Panchayat elections democratic principles are being murdered in broad daylight.....The feudal elements are doing their level best to save their fast-ending existence. At some places casteism is the medium for generating various evils. This effort to save their existence is proving a great obstruction in the development of healthy democracy."[2] A correspondent of the same paper reported from Danta Ramgarh that in the forthcoming elections to Panchayats in villages Roopgarh and Khatu, a big conflict is expected between the jagirdars and the peasants.[3] These conflicts apparently continue in some form or other. For example, the body of the Up-Sarpanch of Shivrati Gram Panchayat in Bhilwara district, who had been a prominent social worker for the past 15 years, was found buried in a *nala*. He had been kidnapped 5 days before.[4]

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[1] **Statesman** (New Delhi edition), 26.8.'55.

[2] **Hindusthan Standard Evening Special** (New Delhi edition), 12.1.'56.

[3] **National Herald**, 19.8.'54.

In Vindhya Pradesh

Elections to Vindhya Pradesh Panchayats towards the end of 1954 also revealed similar activities on the part of the divested owners. *Vindhya Panchayat*, a reputed weekly of State, devoted exclusively to Panchayat affairs, in its editorial of November 7. 1954, said : "Lots of complaints are pouring about the elections to the newly constituted Panchayats. Many illegal activities are going on and the officials must give attention to them. We accept that our village brethren are not as well aware of the processes of the law as they should be. This ignorance of the peasants is being fully exploited by the reactionary elements. Besides, the jagirdars, *mahajans*, the *pavaidars* and *mukhiyas*, who had hitherto been dominant in village life, are not lagging behind in their scheming and cunningness. The masses should not allow such people to interfere in their activities and should elect the best people to Panchayats."

We have before us the files of *Vindhya Panchayat* and another leading weekly of the State, *Bhaskar*, also published from Rewa. While they contain commendable records of Panchayat work, they also abound in reports of unfair dealings in Panchayats, of no-confidence motions against Sarpanches, of factionalism in Panchayats, of interference in Panchayat work by village *Mukhiyas*, of wrong accounting of Panchayat funds, etc.

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[1] **Navyug** (daily, published from Jaipur), dated 28.5.'55.

[2] **Rashtradoot** (daily, published from Jaipur), dated 11.6.'55.

[3] **Rashtradoot**, 20.6.'55.

[4] **Statesman** (New Delhi edition), 7.6.'56.

Rural Conflicts—Involved And Complicated

Compared to these States, the Panchayats in Madhya Bharat and Madhya Pradesh have had a comparatively smooth functioning. We have not been able to peruse the local press of other States. The general pattern, however, is clear enough. In our countryside today live members of different groups with varying interests which conflict with one another. It is hardly a matter of belief or theory. It is a reality we see before our eyes. This conflict is visible in the hundreds of events taking place in the villages everyday. Panchayats have become the centres of these conflicts because they have become by far the most potent forum for the villagers, who had hitherto been denied all avenues of self-expression. In other words, the new corelationship of class forces in the rural India of today expresses itself in the Panchayats, which apparently seem to have become the centres of these conflicts. This conflict of diverse interests in the countryside is, however, not very sharp and clear-cut as, for example, the disputes that raise in industrial centres between the capitalists and the workers. The rural conflict is a highly involved and complicated affair. The broad lines indicated above may generally be true, but then it is not always essential for caste and property differences to be coincident in all cases of rural conflict. A host of other factors, old ties and loyalties, localism and parochialism—all intermingle and intertwine to produce a complex picture, to which the degeneration of the Indian as a man during more than a century of foreign rule, the narrowness of approach, the greed and jealousy, blind self-interest and all similar evil traits make a profound contribution.

"With Independence Weaknesses Of Society Bound To Come Up"—Gandhiji

This long suppressed humanity, having been given the opportunity to fully express itself, now comes up with all its evils and good points, and that is all for the best. For all we know, had not the Panchayat institution been available as a free outlet for village conflicts, they might have expressed themselves in different and dangerous forms. As it is, these exhibitions, deplorable as they are, should not make us lose our perspective. Even before Independence, in *Harijan* of June 1, 1947, Mahatma Gandhi had visualised such a course in post-Independence India. He had written : "With the end of slavery and the dawn of Independence, all the weaknesses of society are bound to come to the surface. I do not see any reason to be unnecessarily upset about it. If we keep our balance at such a time, every tangle will be solved." And he had added: "As far as the economic question is concerned, it has to be solved in any case. Today, there is gross economic inequality. The basis of socialism is economic equality. There can be no *Ramarajya* in the present state of iniquitous inequalities in which a few roll in riches and the masses do not get even enough to eat. I accepted the theory of socialism even while I was in South Africa. My opposition to the socialists and others consists in attacking violence as a means of effecting any lasting reforms."

In other words, Gandhiji was well aware that the conflicts and the consequent disequilibrium could be ended and a stable equilibrium achieved only by resolving the conflicts through the liquidation of class relationships.

Resolving The Conflict—The Class Approach

The means for the liquidation of these relationships is a matter over which there is wide divergence of opinion. There are determined left groups in the country, who look at the Panchayat institution as something around which they can intensify the organisation of kisans on class lines and sharpen the class struggle. Thus, for example, Dr. Z. A. Ahmed, a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of India and General Secretary of the U.P. Unit, writing in the *New Age Monthly* of July 1954, while pleading against a negative attitude to Panchayats "which belittles their role and significance," and accepting that "the Panchayat Raj institutions have come to stay, at least for the time being," says: "They will ruthlessly be used by the ruling class against the interest of the mass of peasants unless the kisan movement is able to prevent this through its day-to-day intervention in Panchayat matters. ....The Kisan Sabha must try to mobilise the largest section of the peasantry, and particularly the poor peasants and the agricultural labourers, to participate actively in the next Panchayat elections which should be properly organised on the basis of a clear-cut Panchayat programme. The Kisan Sabha must concentrate on getting the maximum number of poor peasants and agricultural workers elected to the Panchayats." Dr. Ahmed later says: "Most of the Panchayat issues are such that maximum unity of peasants and agricultural labourers can be built around them. And if these issues are correctly linked up with the basic issues of the agrarian problem, a powerful mass movement can be generated." And he concludes as follows: "Given courageous and competent leadership, the 50 million peasants of U.P., who have such glorious traditions of struggle and sacrifice in the cause of freedom, will surely smash this new slavery of Panchayat Raj to smithereens."

This is a very clear-cut approach to Panchayats. How this can work in actual practice is revealed from the experience of some Panchayats in PEPSU, which were captured by the Communists. According to a correspondent, in these villages they began "experimenting in a sort of parallel government at the village level." Land revenue was realised and the *panchotra* (commission) denied to the *lambardar*. Cattle pounds were opened irrespective of State sanction. Some persons with anti-communist views were murdered, e.g., Lehra Singh jathedar of Village Sangatpura, Police Station Lehragaga.[1]

It is the approach to the Panchayat question which we would like to emphasise. The whole object is to intensify the conflict and not to resolve it. Thus, for example, Shri Pratap Kumar Tandon, a Joint Secretary of the U.P. Kisan Sabha, claiming that in the elections to Panchayats in the five eastern districts of U.P., namely, Deoria, Gorakhpur, Basti, Ballia and Azamgarh, held in March 1956, as much as 2,000 elected Panchayat Pradhans belonged to or were supporters of the Kisan Sabha, says[2]: "These 2,000 have been elected on the basis of a declared programme of the Kisan Sabha. Their success in fulfilling this programme will not only raise their prestige and those of the kisans in the villages, but will also give unprecedented fillip to the struggle of the exploited masses against the feudal elements in the surrounding villages."

Resolving The Conflict—The Gandhian Approach

This question of conflicts in our villages was placed before Gandhiji also time and again, and he has expressed himself upon it a number of times. Thus, in *Harijan* of February 20, 1937, he replies to a young village worker who complains that he found party feelings and quarrels, jealousy and wickedness in more than three-fourths of the village people. Mahatma Gandhi said that the correspondent's "statement may be generally accepted." He, however, points out that "the defects noticed by the correspondent are not inherent in village life." And he says: "The reasons for the tragic state is not far to seek. Villages have suffered long from neglect by those who have had the benefit of education. They have chosen the city life." In this memorable note, Mahatma Gandhi went on to unbare his basic approach to the entire problem of village unlift. He says: "The village movement is an attempt to establish healthy contact with the villages by inducing those who are fired with the spirit of service to settle in them and find self-expression in the service of the villagers....Those who have settled in villages in the spirit of service are not dismayed by the difficulities facing them. They knew before they went that they would have to contend against many difficulties including even sullenness on the part of villagers. Only those, therefore, who have faith in themselves and in their mission will serve the villagers and influence their lives. A true life lived among the people is in itself an object-lesson that must produce its own effect upon immediate surroundings." And he adds : "Patient effort will show that villagers are not very different from city-dwellers and that they will respond to kindliness and attention....Moreover the companionship of the great and good is available to all through the works of saints like Chaitanya, Ramkrishna, Tulsidas, Kabir, Nanak, Dadu, Tukaram, Tiruvalluvar and others....The difficulty is to get the mind turned to the reception of permanent values." And he advised those who wish to serve "not to give in but persist in their effort and by their presence make the villages more livable and lovable."

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[1] Hindustan Times, 10.1.'53.

[2] See article in Janayug (weekly Communist Hindi Journal of note published from Lucknow), Vol. XI, No. 34, dated April 1, 1956.

Violence Not An Essential Pre-Condition: The Power Of Non-Violence

The difference of approach would be clear.[1] Even if one accepted the total character of class relationship, an attempt at violent liquidation of these relationships would have the objective of a sudden and definite break with a class society. Howsoever desirable such an objective may be, a violent struggle in the society itself need not be an essential pre-condition for it. Non-violence can as well be a powerful instrument in bringing out a sudden and definite change in social relationships. When Gandhiji appeared on the Indian political scene and presented non-violence to the country, the first reaction was one of incredulity. It could easily have been mixed with ridicule but for the respect which Mahatmajee's great personality inspired, as also his achievements in South Africa. Gradually, however, as the heroic aspects of non-violence came to the surface, and his experiments here and there yielded results, faith in Gandhiji's novel weapon spread with astonishing rapidity. In due course it almost swallowed up all other creeds current at the time in India's political horizon. Non-violence, as interpreted by Gandhiji, was gradually revealed as a comprehensive creed embracing all things of the body, mind and spirit, and no politicians and politics of the time could escape from it.

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[1] We have come across another reference by Mahatma Gandhi to village factions and conflicts when he was touring Bengal in 1947, in Tendulkar's **Mahatma** (Vol. VII, pp. 390-391). At Vijaynagar on February 9, he was asked the following question :

"In almost all villages, there are parties and factions. When we draft local help, whether we wish it or not, we become involved in the local power politics. How can we steer clear of this difficulty? Should we try to by-pass both parties and carry on work with the help of outside workers? Our experience has been that such work becomes entirely contingent upon the outside aid and crumbles down, as soon as the latter is withdrawn. What should we do then to develop local initiative and foster local co-operation?"

Mahatma Gandhi replied : "Alas for India that parties and factions are to be found in the villages, as they are to be found in our cities. And when the power politics enters our villages with less thought of the welfare of the villages and more of using them for increasing the parties' own power, this becomes a hindrance to the progress of villages, rather than any help. I would say that whatever be the consequences, we must make use, as much as possible, of the local help and if we are free from the taint of power politics, we are not likely to go wrong. Let us remember that English-educated men and women from the cities have criminally neglected the villages of India, which are, in fact, the backbone of the country. The process of remembering our neglect will induce patience. I have never gone to a single village which is devoid of an honest worker. We fail to find him, when we are not humble enough to recognize any merit in our villages. Of course, we are to steer clear of local politics, and this we shall learn to do, when we accept help from all parties and no parties, wherever it is really good. I would regard it as fatal for success to by-pass villagers. As I knew it is very difficult, I have tried rigidly to observe the rule of 'one village, one worker', except that where he or she does not know the Bengali language, an interpreter's help has been given. I can only say that this system has so far answered the purpose. I must, therefore, discount your experience. And I would further suggest that we have got into the vicious habit of coming to hasty conclusion. Before pronouncing such a sweeping condemnation, as is implied in the sentence that 'the work becomes entirely contingent upon the outside aid and crumbles down as soon as the latter is withdrawan', I would go so far as to say that even a few years' experience of residence in one village, trying to work through the local workers, should not be regarded as the conclusive proof that work could not be done through and by the local workers. The contrary is obviously true. It now becomes unnecessary for me here to examine the last sentence in detail. I can categorically say to the principal worker : 'If you have any outside help, get rid of it, and work singly, courageously, intelligently with all the local help you can get, and, if you do not succeed, blame only yourself and no one else and nothing else.'"

Economic Equality Essential For Real Village Democracy

In fact, the whole stress of the philosophic and intellectual background of India, and of its great national struggle for freedom, is on the side of democracy, but the explosive economic and social situation in the country, more specially in our villages, gives any un-democratic creed an opening whose subversive possibilities are far from negligible. The situation confronting us, therefore, forbids complacency and easy optimisms, laxity of discipline and all their soft-hearted companions. The manner in which and the speed at which the land problem is solved is bound to affect the introduction of Panchayat democracy in our rural areas. And so early redistribution of lands, fixation of ceiling upon landholdings and far-reaching tenurial reforms gain added importance. Unless economic democracy is brought about by a process of speedy legislation, economic inequality will continue to obstruct the advance to real democracy and create numerous complications, particularly in those parts of the country where economic classes are synonymous with caste. In the absence of economic justice, our Village Panchayats will fail to secure the co-operation of the masses for development activities and will never become the nerve centres of rural progress. For, the average villager will remain hesitant or indifferent towards any programme of development unless he were assured a share in it. A correct land policy would remove the last vestiges of vested interests which are trying to entrench themselves in places of authority the Panchayats provide and thus impede national progress.

Shri Dhebar On The Evolution Of A New Leadership In The Village

The question of conflicts in our villages and Panchayats today should, therefore, not deter us from the correct perspective to be adopted. When we say this, we have in mind the laments of many city-bred intellectuals, who see in the Panchayat experiment a turning back of the clock, a step back to tribalism, etc., and whose such convictions are confirmed by the conflicts so apparent and visible today in our villages and Panchayats. The problem, however, is different. These conflicts have to be viewed as the birth-pangs of a new leadership in the village and the gradual but certain end of the old one. Shri U. N. Dhebar has placed the issue squarely in the following words : [1] "The old leadership in the village, ignorant of the fundamental change that is taking place in the relationship between man and man in India today, will linger on for sometime. The new leadership that is required cannot, however, be created in a minute. It is, indeed, a whole process. This evolution must be brought about in a manner which would eliminate friction and strain and yet would see that the process does not result in entrenching the forces of reaction. How are we to avoid this contingency happening? In my opinion, it would be necessary to deal with the existing leadership in the village psychologically. It can be done only by a qualified body of persons who understand villagers, who could with sympathy bring about the transformation. It means supplementing the leadership of the village. To expect this role from the District Boards of today would be assuming too much. There must be a sort of non-official-cum-official agency whereby the resources of the State and of the village, as also the experience of all, can be pooled together in the service of the people. I must hasten to make it clear that there should be no thought of interfering with the local initiative. It is a question of assistance and guidance to the Panchayats with a view not to control but to convert."

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[1] See Introduction.

CHAPTER XXXVI

PANCHAYATS: THE CREDIT BALANCE

"Little cottages under the mountains,
What has become of you?

"The sun was out, the beautiful sun,
Shining on the mountains,
Beneath the sun my cottage stood as in a dream,
In it I spent my youth, my whole life,
And there as a child I sang: Where is my home?

"Little cottages under the mountains,
What has become of you."[1] —A CZECH SONG

"Sweet smiling village, loveliest of the lawn,
Thy sports are fled, and all thy charms withdrawn;
Amidst thy bowers the tyrants' hand is seen,
And desolation saddens all thy green." [2] —GOLDSMITH

"When heads of houses love one another there will be no more mutual usurpation; when individuals love one another there will be no more mutual injury. When ruler and ruled love each other they will be gracious and loyal; when father and son love each other they will be affectionate and filial; when elder and younger brothers love each other they will be harmonious. When all the people in the world love one another, then the strong will not overpower the weak, the many will not oppress the few, the wealthy will not mock the poor, the honoured will not disdain the humble, and the cunning will not deceive the simple. And it is all due to mutual love that calamities, strifes, complaints and hatred are prevented from arising. Therefore, the benevolent exalt it."[3]

—MOTSE

WHILE evaluating the tremendous growth of Village Panchayats in India in post-Independence years, a development pregnant with deep meaning and significance for the entire course of our future history, we have to be vary of two types of critics.

The *'Chhidra-Anveshaks'* and the 'Drain Inspectors'

One of these belong to the category of *Chhidra-Anveshaks*, a type very much to be found in the current Hindi literary world (from where, in fact, the term has been borrowed), which takes particular pleasure in looking at and painstakingly searching for other peoples' holes. In the Panchayat context, such *Chhidra-Anveshaks* see nothing but chaos and disaster in the conferment of wide self-governing powers on our 'ignorant and illiterate' villagers. A slight variant of this type may be classed as the 'Drain Inspectors,' whose functions have been typically immortalised by Mahatma Gandhi through his famous characterisation of Miss Mayo's work on India as the 'Drain Inspector's Report.' Failing to perceive the dynamics of the situation, and unable to see the dying off of the old and birth of the new, to such persons every single conflict in a village, every single default of any Panchayat or its official is a sure sign of deep maladies in our body politic without counting which the Panchayat experiment has been unthinkingly launched.

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[1] From Maurice Hindus' **To Sing With the Angels**; translation of a Czech song entitled 'Chaloupki pod horama.'
[2] From **Deserted Village.**
[3] From Lin Yutang's **The Wisdom of China and India.**

Gandhiji & Nehru On The Greatness Of The Indian Peasant

Such an approach, which fortunately is confined to a rather limited circle, fails to see the other side of the medal. While the Panchayat experiment, by releasing the dormant energies of our rural population for self-expression, has brought the latent inequalities and consequent conflicts to the fore, it has, many times more than this, also thrown up the best that is in our peasantry, which is Indian humanity. The Indian peasant has been a great fellow in many ways. Not for nothing Mahatma Gandhi, with his great understanding of India's millions, saw the "concentrated essence of wisdom" in the inhabitants of the humblest cottage. Once a Polish engineer, Frydman, told Gandhiji : "When I turn from the busy West to the masses in the Indian villages, I seem to be moving in a different world altogether, in which stagnation reigns." And Gandhiji replied, "Yes, so long as you look on the surface. But the moment you talk to them and they begin to speak, you will find that wisdom drops from their lips. Behind the crude exterior, you will find a deep reservoir of spirituality. I call this culture. You will not find such a thing in the West. You try to engage a European peasant in conversation, and you will find that he is uninterested in things spiritual. In the case of the Indian villager, an age-old culture is hidden under an encrustment of crudeness. Take away the encrustation, remove his illiteracy, and you have the finest specimen of what a cultured, cultivated, free citizen should be." [1] Nehru has also been impressed by the "picture gallery" he saw in the mind of "even the illiterate peasant." [2] He says : "The old epics of India, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* and other books, in popular translations and paraphrases, were widely known among the masses, and every incident and story and moral in them was engraved on the popular mind and gave a richness and a content to it. Illiterate villagers would know hundreds of verses by heart and their conversation would be full of references to them or to some story with a moral, enshrined by some old classic. Often I was surprised by some such literary turn given by a group of villagers to a simple talk about present-day affairs."

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[1] Tendulkar's **Mahatma,** Vol. V, p. 11.

[2] **Discovery of India,** Op. cit., p. 63.

The Indian peasant is essentially peace-loving, unacquisitive and deeply religious. He lives simply and is not the least covetous. His highest ambition is to earn enough to pay off the three debts, the *Deva-rina,* the *Pitri-rina,* and *Rishi-rina* (ante, p. 125). For centuries he lived in co-operative communities, respecting each others' rights, seldom quarreling. Humility remained his great virtue. After the great destruction of these village communities, when through the force of economic and social changes the baser elements of man came on top and the communal co-operative aspect blown sky-high, these latent qualities also went under. But traditions die hard, and though the 'encrustation' grew thicker and thicker, the essential character of the Indian peasant remained basically the same.

Panchayats Bring Up The Best In The Indian Peasant

The great thing about Panchayat revival is that the encrustment is being removed, and with spread of literacy, and the progress towards removal of economic inequalities, the great virtues are coming up. In the West, the dominant feature of village existence of the individual has been the plighted word and all out attempts to acquire the maximum possible for one's own prosperity and well-being, at the cost of the community and even against it. In India, while acquisitive tendencies have undoubtedly been present, the dominant trait has been a willingness of the individual to sacrifice himself for the community, of renunciation, of risking death and destruction in order to remain true to a pledge given or a promise made. The greatest novelist hitherto of Hindi, the late Premchand, delved deep into the psychology and the make-up of the Indian villager, and his novels and stories, while mercilessly exposing the village villains, draw a most lucid and fascinating picture of the traditionally good Indian villager. And so in our villages once the gordion knot is cut, once goodness and virtues have the better of jealousies and wickedness, there ensues a regular competition between the members of the community to outdo the others in goodness and generosity.

These aspects of our village life have been reflected in the proud record of innumerable Village Panchayats in different States of India in the course of the last few years. In Book II, in the different Chapters, for certain States for which the information was available, we have attempted to recount Panchayat achievements in terms of figures and statistics. But the other aspect of these achievements, extremely human and intelligent, in their variety in the different villages, are more interesting and instructive and better help to understand the transformation which Panchayats are capable of bringing about. This information we have found strewn in local language journals, the Panchayat journals, and rarely they 'trickle up' to the great English dailies. Such inspiring stories are not one or two, but an entire lot, and make most interesting reading and can be put together in a couple of hundred pages. Limited by space, we proceed to give below just a few samples.

Some Inspiring Panchayat Stories

Thus, Murkheri Gram Panchayat of tehsil and district Rohtak, near Delhi, adopted a novel method for the recovery of unlicenced arms, unlawfully kept by the villagers to avenge family feuds. This happened in June 1954. The Panchayat directed every adult male of the village to enter the room of the village *chaupal* from one door by covering himself from head to foot with a cloth and to go out through another door after being searched so that the person in possession of unlicensed arms could deposit the same without any fear of being detected. In this manner when the members of the Panchayat went in after making all adult males pass through the room, they took possession of a number of arms and ammunition. This novel method was adopted when all other efforts made by the Panchayat for two days had failed to bring about the recovery of arms.

From Maharashtra, from village Gagode in Kolaba district, the birth place of Acharya Vinoba Bhave, comes an inspiring story. In July 1955, this little village of 400 inhabitants decided to make true Vinoba's conception of 'Gram Raj,' whereunder every village should become self-sufficient. The first step taken by the village community was to try and bring back the *Katkaris,* a backward class of the village who number 150, on par socially with the rest of the population. 75 acres of land was distributed among the *Katkaris,* but it was soon felt that the land gift was not enough, as the people had no means to cultivate the land or produce anything but coarse grains. And so the village, with the help of the District Bhoodan Samiti, spent Rs. 4,500 in providing them with a subsidy for ploughing the land—14 bullocks, agricultural implements and paddy seed for sowing. Food for them and fodder for the cattle was provided till the next crop was ready for harvesting.

Another instance is the case of village Pipri in Aurangabad district of Hyderabad State. According to a report, from this village of 1,000 inhabitants, not a single case has gone to the court during the last four years. The Village Panchayat has successfully resolved all disputes. There is also a village co-operative and it has regularly provided all the daily requirements of the villagers at reasonable prices.

A unique combination of inspiration and perspiration is reported from the Russera area in Darbhanga district of Bihar where, in the beginning of 1955, 40 per cent of the 38 mile long Burhi-Gandak embankment was completed in one-and-a-half month's time by the Village Panchayats through thousands of willing hands toiling hard with soil and spade. The work was entrusted to the agency of Panchayats, and the correspondent of an esteemed Bihar daily,[1] who frankly confesses that he had "apprehensions" about it, has gone on record that the Panchayats "have emerged out of the test successfully and shown what popular enthusiasm is capable of. The trust reposed in them has not been unjustified." He found that at places "the work had been done with perfection of a highly skilled worker." The area was "vibrating with a new life, full of energy and enthusiasm." And the correspondent has remarked : "It is not just an embankment for them but also a mighty monument marking the banishment of their poverty and misery and dawn of an era of prosperity and progress. The innocent and industrious rural folks are forcing the blind foster mother called 'FATE' to smile on them, promising them plenty and assuring them affluence."

There is yet another story of village Shamsapur,[2] a tiny village near Gurgaon in Punjab. By a voluntary decision, the people decided to efface the entire old unhygienic, insanitary village from its existence and build a new planned village. In the recasted village, each family gets a recasted self-contained modern house.[3] There would be three parks, a library equipped with a radio set, a primary school and a Panchayat Ghar. The dirty old pond where mosquitoes breed is being replaced by a *pucca* tank with bathing, washing and other facilities. Agriculturally, it has been decided to straight away introduce new methods and do away with the old ones. The writer of the article has recorded: "The tempo at the moment is high and people believe they can change their fate themselves."

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[1] **Indian Nation**, dated 11.3.'55.

[2] See article entitled "Shamsapur Shows the Way" by Prof. D. C. Varma, Director, Public Relations, Punjab, in **Advance** (published by the Punjab Public Relations Department) of March 1956.

[3] A one-roomed house measuring 20'×60 will have in addition to the living accommodation, a court-yard, cattle shed, a bath-room, an ever clean latrine and a kitchen fitted with a smokeless *chulha*. A wind-mill is being put to provide tap water to every house. The one-roomed house will cost less than a thousand rupees.

We have come across a unique story of a *Sneh-Sammelan*[1] (Affection-Conference) at village Vankhali near Shivganj in Marwar, Rajasthan, on Diwali Day 1955. Held with great eclat and enthusiasm, the object of the Conference convened by the Gram Panchayat was to develop closer affinity and fellow-feeling among the villagers. Bhabut Singh, the young enthusiastic Up-Sarpanch was the moving spirit behind the Conference. And the following is his brief speech, which should be read in the light of Nehru's remarks about the Indian peasant referred earlier in the Chapter. He said: "In *Satya-Yuga* Rama returned to his home after conquering Lanka, and then Deepawali was first celebrated and people lighted *ghee* wicks in their homes. What is significant, however, is not the conquest of Lanka but defeat of the *Asurs* (demons) by which the earth was saved from sins and liberated from the oppression of the *Asurs* and made safe for righteousness and justice based on law. But have we not among us today the *Asurs* of starvation and hunger, of poverty and exploitation? And in *Satya-Yuga* Rama fought alone, but today we need a Rama in every home for which sacrifice and hard work is most essential."

Here we see a typical Indian peasant rising to his unique heights, the entire inspiration emanating and flowing from the Panchayat experiment.

The stories can be multiplied, but the above may be expected to give a cross-section view of the transformation in the personality of the Indian village and villager being brought about by Village Panchayats slowly but surely. It is a phenomenon which needs to be watched closely with sympathy and understanding. We need scientific studies on the subject. Our Universities, the Research Scholars, and other Research and Evaluation Organisations have here a wide field open before them—a type of study not only extremely interesting in itself but one which can materially contribute to the transformation of Indian society.

Some Western Studies Of Village India

Talking of village studies, we are reminded of certain studies of Indian Villages conducted by some Westerners in recent years, mostly from the U.S. We have always viewed with a strange feeling the spectacle of persons hailing from a country where 95 per cent of the farms are electrified, coming all the way to study a peasantry 95 per cent of whom have not seen electricity. The effort required would be well imagined. We are also reminded of the scandals of the Cornell-Lucknow University Research Project for rural studies and what Lucknow's esteemed *National Herald* wrote about it, and what the august professors of the Lucknow University were compelled to say on the subject. These rural studies, in many thinking minds, are not probably as innocent as they apparently appear, but then we believe in regarding the Marriotts and Mandelbaums, Cohns and Steeds, as sincere searchers of knowledge.[1] The amount of effort and labour that has gone into their study is self-evident. We have come across another paper by an American scholar, Prof. Daniel Thorner,[2] in which the learned Professor pronounces certain downright and categorical judgements on our Village Panchayats.

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[1] See **Marwar-Sandesh**, weekly published from Shivganj, Ajmer; Issue dated November 24, 1955.

Marriott attempts a study of village Kishan Garhi in Aligarh district in Uttar Pradesh. He spent a year there. The study is quite useful, though Prof. D. P. Mukerji, the well-known scholar and teacher, has said : "My tributes to Mr. Marriott's pen, although at places he has betrayed his childishness. For instance, what really the term 'cultural traditions' connotes? The recitals of priests?" Gitel P. Steed has contributed a paper entitled 'Notes on an Approach to a Study of Personality Formation in a Hindu Village in Gujerat.' The author has taken pains. But Prof. D. P. Mukerji cogently asks :[3] "What is the Bengali equivalent of 'personality'? Is there an Indian synonym for the term 'personality' so often used by American intellectuals these days?" And he has concluded: "Our problem is basically different. For us "personality research' or 'tension research' has very little significance."[4]

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[1] See **Village India : Studies in the Little Community**, The University of Chicago Press, 1955; edited by McKim Marriott, containing papers on studies of Indian villages in different parts of India. The contributors are: Alan R. Beals, Bernard S. Cohn, E. Kathleen Gough, Oscar Lewis, David G. Mandelbaum, McKim Marriott, Gitel P. Steed. There is also a study of a Mysore village by M. N. Srinivas. This study has been published by the American Anthrapological Association.

[2] **The Village Panchayat as a Vehicle of Change** by Prof. D. Thorner, Diocesan Press, Madras, (Reprinted from **The Indian Year Book of International Affairs, 1953.**)

[3] Prof. D. P. Mukerji's these remarks occur in a column entitled 'Mone Elo', which he writes for a leading Bengali weekly **Desh**. The note in question appeared in Vol. 23, No. 7 of **Desh**, dated December 17, 1955; p. 495.

[4] The following shattering observations of Prof. Mukerji may also be noted by the reader : "We all know where the present-day American civilisation has led its people to. Today the average American citizen has no peace of mind although oppulance he has. He is care-frought, restless and his family life is anything but worth living. That is why the study of personality. I have seen the young children of many American families and I had the opportunity to have the company of more than one American research scholar. I dare say, I did not like their attitude to life."

Panchayats "An Exercise In Frustration"

What strikes us as amazing is the facility with which these visiting foreign scholars, basing themselves upon observations, howsoever 'deep' and 'thorough,' but confined to just a few out of our more than half a million villages, express themselves categorically with an air of finality, on our village folks, Panchayats, land reforms, agricultural productivity, and all the rest of it. David G. Mandelbaum, in an article published in the *Economic Weekly* of Bombay (dated May 22, 1954), has made some similar categorical statements. According to him, land reforms in India, under existing conditions, are bound to lead to a fall in agricultural productivity. He has made a reference to what he calls the *jajamani* system in our villages, from which it follows that he has got it all wrong. We need not, however, go into these and other facile statements. We are interested in his remarks about Panchayats. To him "the new Panchayats seem generally to be off to a shaky start." He refers to factionalism in Panchayats, but "in some villages the new Panchayat is less a forum for factionalism than it is an empty form set up for the satisfaction of visiting officials."

Prof. Daniel Thorner, to whose note we have referred earlier, summarises the findings of some of the contributors to *Village India* in 10 pages out of an 11-page pamphlet, and on the 11th page feels that "there is no need to cite further village studies or the mass of additional evidence available to make clear that the Panchayats, whatever they may or may not have been in the past, are not today tried and tested instruments for furthering India's economic development." And he ends up by saying: "To approach the goal of rural economic development through the agency of the existing Village Panchayats would appear to be an exercise in frustration."

The Shallow Character Of The 'Studies'

Thus, these American scholars would have us believe that all his life the Father of the Nation, by his insistence on Panchayat revival, was only pleading for "an exercise in frustration." Further, that our Constitution, by squarely laying down the organisation of Panchayats as a State responsibility in the Directive Principles of State Policy, has acted unwisely, and that the entire great Panchayat experiment launched in the different States of the Indian Union has been no better than running after a mirage.

The utterly ludicrous and shallow character of these 'studies', and observations based upon them, would be self-evident. They are based upon ignorance and on incomplete information, which is a dangerous thing. Undoubtedly these 'studies' involve large expenditure which a poor Indian intellectual can hardly dream of, and, may be, after some such studies these gentlemen must be regarded as 'India experts' in their homes, and we do not grudge it. We would, however, commend to them one quality of our villages and villagers whom they apparently are out to dissect. It is the virtue of humility. Education and knowledge must make a man humble—this is an old teaching in our ancient land. Our villages have this quality in abundance. The foreign scholars can imbibe a bit of it to their great personal advantage.

CHAPTER XXXVII

PANCHAYATS IN INDIA'S MARCH TOWARDS SOCIALISM

"Economic equality of my conception does not mean that every one would literally have the same amount. It simply means that everybody should have enough for his or her needs....The elephant needs a thousand times more food than the ant, but that is not an indication of inequality. So the real meaning of economic equality is: 'To each according to his needs.' That was the definition of Marx. If a single man demanded as much as a man with wife and four children that would be a violation of economic equality.

"Let no one try to justify the glaring difference between the classes and the masses, the prince and the pauper, by saying that the former need more. That will be idle sophistry and a travesty of my argument....The contrast between the rich and the poor today is a painful sight. The poor villagers are exploited by the foreign government and also by their countrymen—the city-dwellers. They produce the food and go hungry. They produce milk and their children have to go without it. It is disgraceful. Every one must have a balanced diet, a decent house to live in, facilities for the education of one's children and adequate medical relief. This constitutes my picture of economic equality. I do not want to taboo everthing above and beyond the bare necessaries, but they must come after the essential needs of the poor are satisfied. First things must come first." [1]

—MAHATMA GANDHI

"I have been interested in reactions to the decision of the Congress at the Avadi Session....Most attention is being drawn to the resolutions stating that we should aim at a Socialist Pattern of Society....It was not really, in a sense, a change of policy because for a long time past, I should say, a quarter of a century, and in a sense ever since Gandhiji came to the Congress, the outlook of the Congress was, broadly speaking, socialistic. ....I am merely mentioning this to show that for the Congress to decide on Socialistic Pattern is not as if there has been a big jump into a new place. It was a very natural thinking today, in keeping our traditions, to give this element of precision to our future work, specially to our planning." [2]

—JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

"The Socialist Pattern of Society accepts the thesis that there is a class conflict. It also accepts the thesis that the proper way of removing that class conflict is that the ownership of the means of production should vest in the society or there is social control of the means of production. But it differs from Marx in this respect. Marx conceived the use of force for its implementation in the final stage of the struggle. We do not conceive of the use of force in our Socialist Pattern of Society. We wish to achieve Socialism through persuasion and conversion. I think we are doing it gradually with comparative success." [3]

—U. N. DHEBAR

IN order to fix the vital role of Village Panchayats in India's march to a socialist society, it is first of all necessary to understand the essential features of Indian socialism.

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[1] **Harijan,** 31.3.'46.

[2] From a speech delivered at a meeting of the Congress Parliamentary Party, at New Delhi on 20.2.'55 (See **A.I.C.C. Economic Review**, Vol. VI, No. 21, Whole No. 116, dated March 1, 1955).

[3] From reply to questions put by Gandhi-Gram workers during tour of South India in April 1956. (See **A.I.C.C. Economic Review**, Vol. VIII, No. 3, Whole No. 148, dated June 1, 1956).

It is a comprehensive and fascinating subject, deserving an entirely separate study. We can hardly do justice to the subject in a brief chapter. We shall make an humble attempt to deal with the subject in the broadest outline.

Indian National Congress—The Communist Thesis

Today, the Indian National Congress is the biggest party of socialism in India. Certain sections of political opinion in India have chosen to proclaim from house tops, in the course of the last three decades of India's history, that the Congress is a 'bourgeois' organisation, an organisation manned by people who represent 'bourgeois' interests and a leadership which consciously guards and protects the Indian capitalist and vested interests. This has been the gravamen of the charge against the Congress by the left parties of India, specially the Communist Party. This thesis of the Communists is in turn derived from elaborate formulations worked out in the Communist International, in the years following the November Revolution in Russia. In the formulation of the thesis, worked as part of one entire strategy of colonial revolutions as part of world revolution, the greatest theoreticians and leaders of the world Communist movement, including Lenin, took a hand. The Congress leadership was regarded as vacillating, typifying the character of the Indian bourgeoisie. The Indian bourgeoisie, it was contended, had an abnormal growth, under the aegis of an alien imperialist power. Imperialism, though interested in throttling India's industrial development, and maintaining it as a reservoir for its raw material requirements and a dumping ground for its machine-produced consumer's goods, nevertheless, out of its own contradictions, and in strategic interests, allowed limited industrialisation of India. The bourgeoisie, which was thus born, and reaped profits, could not find avenues for investment and industrialisation, got disgruntled, and came to lead an anti-imperialist national movement. In the absence of avenues for investment, it invested in land, and thus got linked up with vested landed interests, becoming all the more halting and reactionary. It lead the mass movement to extract concessions from imperialism, but the colonial masses being basically revolutionary, once the movement was started, in spite of constant attempts made by the leadership to limit and control it, it took to revolutionary methods, and then, "hating revolution more than it hates imperialism," the 'bourgeois' leadership of the Congress sabotaged the struggle, stopped and prevented it, etc., e.g., withdrawal of the Non-Co-operation Movement by Gandhiji after Chauri-Chaura, the Gandhi-Irwin Truce, etc.

The above may be regarded as a very brief capitulation of the joint statement of the eighteen Communist accused at the historic Meerut Conspiracy Case, then in the first Political Thesis of the Communist Party of India, accepted in or about the year 1934. Since these early years, the attitude of the C.P.I. towards the Congress has undergone changes, for a brief period of three years, 1937-1940, they even entered the Congress as part of a United Front Policy, following the VIIth World Congress of the Communist International at Moscow in 1935, but this basic evaluation of the role of the Congress and its leadership has remained valid all these years. As late as 1954-55, one of the leading theoreticians of the Indian Communist Party, Shri E. M. S. Namboodripad, in a series of eight articles in *New Age Monthly,* being a review write-up on Tendulkar's monumental study *Mahatma,* stuck to this very policy and approach.

Bulganin On Role Of Gandhiji: Congress And Communists—The Present Phase

Prime Minister Bulganin of the Soviet Union, however, when he visited India with Mr. Khruschev in late 1955, said in a meeting at Bombay that Gandhiji was a great liberator and he compared him to Lenin in many respects. We are not aware of the possible consequences of this and similar other pronouncements on Gandhiji, Nehru and the Indian National Movement in general, from responsible communist sources, on the policy of the Indian Communists. It has been reported, however, that the recent Indian Communist Congress at Palghat was divided over the approaches of Shri P. C. Joshi, an ex-General Secretary of the Party, and Shri Ajoy Ghosh, the present General Secretary, on the question of an evaluation of the role of the bourgeoisie of India in the present situation. Viewed from the Congress end, this difference between the two top-ranking Communist leaders of India can at best be taken as a difference between tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee, since the essential 'bourgeois' character of the leadership was accepted by both, Shri Joshi emphasising that there is a 'schism' between the 'progressive' and the 'non-progressive' sections, that under Nehru, the progressive section has enforced a policy of peace and of progress at home, and so should be supported, but also fought wherever necessary, while Shri Ajoy Ghosh apparently was not so sure about it.

The Debacle Of Indian Communism: The Prospects

Theoretical argument and Marxist dialectics and deductions apart, to the vast masses of India, characterisation of Gandhiji or Nehru as 'bourgeois' agents by anybody can only appear, and did appear, utterly ridiculous and even revolting. The Communists in

India, however, stuck to their characterisation of the Indian National Congress as a 'bourgeois' organisation, and constantly fought against it, and in the exercises thus undertaken, appeared before the Indian masses as fighting against the national movement itself, and so were isolated from the people, their influence being confined to some industrial areas. In fact, the actual character of the Congress and the role of its leadership has been the deciding factor in all their policies. The first Communist group was formed in China by Mao Tse-Tung in 1921, and the first Communist group came into existence in India in 1924. Today the Communist Party is ruling in China but the Communist Party of India is no where near it, and these days, specially after the exposure of Stalin's 'personality cult,' the ranks are feeling frustrated, and most sincere and capable persons, who have devoted their life to the movement are feeling lost and almost 'cheated'. The roots may well lie in the complete failure of the Indian Communists to correctly place the Congress and its leadership.[1]

From this, however, it should and must not be concluded that in the years lying ahead the Communist group in India will cease to be a national political force. It comprises very able people, an ideologically conscious rank and file, and more than all this, it has deep social roots in the conditions of poverty which obtain in India The prospect of their collaboration with other national forces in works of development and progress should not, however, be considered bleak. In fact, the continued estrangement of Communists from national ranks can only be viewed with regret, though for this they have to thank themselves. In its leadership are to be found persons whose honesty, sincerity, ability, passion for the masses of India, and dedicated life of sacrifice cannot be doubted. Its ranks, for their discipline and knowledge and study, have won tributes from the national leadership. If this potential force for good agrees to India's peaceful development towards socialism, in all sincerity, the results can only be beneficial. But this involves forgetting many old lessons and learning new ones, a most serious re-thinking and re-appraisal, for which the prospects apparently are not very bright.

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[1] A discussion of Communist relationship with the Indian National Congress during the last three decades of Indian history would be an interesting study. We have of necessity to be brief. We have not referred to references of Lenin, and later of Stalin, to Gandhiji and the 'national bourgeoisie', not to speak of lesser international Communist intellectuals like R. Palme Dutt, and some Soviet writers. We have before us some of their writings, and as we have perused them, we have noted with amazement the vehemence of the language. Without for a moment realising the high respect and adulation of the masses of India for Gandhiji and Nehru, the choicest epithets have been hurled against them, which makes unhappy reading. There is another aspect. At some stages the top-most Communist leaders held important positions in the Congress organisation. Thus S. A. Dange and K. N. Joglekar were in early twenties important office-bearers in the Bombay Congress, and in 1937-39, Z. A. Ahmed, a leading communist of the day, was secretary of the U. P. Congress Committee. K. P. Gopalan and E.M.S. Namboodripad were important office-bearers in the Malabar Congress. There are other aspects. After Gandhiji's release from incarceration from the Aga Khan Palace in post-1942 years, there were contacts established between him and the Communists, and there was a definite offer from Gandhiji to the Communists to join the Congress, the condition being to abjure violence, which they did not accept. In post-Independence years, in 1947-49, B. T. Randive, noted for his sectarianism and sharpness, came on top of the C.P.I., ousting P. C. Joshi, the builder of the C.P.I., whose entire period of leadership was characterised as one long crying reformism. During Randive's period, an infection of Stalin's ruthless purges caught the C.P.I. and the topmost among them were expelled, suspended, censured, etc. It was a period of all-out violence, the Telengana phase, but soon Randive's methods were regarded as disastrous, to be succeeded by the more sober and balanced leaderships of Ajoy Ghosh. The latest position is as revealed at Palghat, to which we have already made a reference.

Indian National Congress And The Socialists

We have characterised the National Congress as the biggest party of socialism in India, and we have thus far discussed it in relation to the Communist Party of India, another party of socialism in India. Next to the Communists come the Socialists of India, currently divided into the Praja Socialist Party and Dr. Lohia's Socialist Party. All the Socialist leaders of note have been prominent Congressmen, some highly respected, and they even controlled some important Pradesh Congress Committees. For example, the highly respected late Acharya Narendra Deva and his Socialist colleagues were in complete control of the U.P. Congress for a number of years. About these Socialists in the Congress, Nehru has expressed himself thus[1]: "This social thinking was going on all the time, and although there was a Congress Socialist Party formed in the middle of thirties or thereabout, consisting of some eminent colleagues of ours, there were at least as many people in the Congress, apart from the Congress Socialist Party, who were socialists, probably more. There may have been this difference, however, and I think it is true to say that the thinking of the leaders of the Congress Socialist Party became naturally a little more precise, even though there was a good deal of lack of precision."

The Congress Socialist Party, dissatisfied with the Congress leadership on the one hand, and at loggerheads with the Indian Communists on the other, broke away from the parent body, the Indian National Congress, in 1948-49. Important sections in the Party did not line up with this policy, and remained within the Congress. After its exit from the National Congress, the Socialists underwent a series of metamorphoses, and when a Congress stalwart, Acharya Kripalani, broke from the Congress in 1951, and formed the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party (K.M.P.P.), the two groups merged to emerge as the Praja Socialist Party. This Party has been very much weakened by the schism of Dr. Lohia and his group. Never very clear in its ideology, and comprising different schools of thought ranging from the Sarvodaya and Gandhian variety to pure unadulterated Marxism, this socialist wing in India's politics has today been very much weakened by the death of Acharya Narendra Deva, who was its tower of strength, and retirement from active politics of Shri Jai Prakash Narain, another stalwart, who is now devoting himself entirely to Vinoba's Bhoodan movement. The value of this socialist wing, therefore, as a party of socialism in India, is very much minimised. The Party, in fact, is in a state of decay and may not count for much in the coming years when India is to take energetic steps in its march towards socialism. Its leadership, and its ranks, however, can contribute a lot towards India's progress by coming back to the Congress, whose doors are open for them. Indeed, many important persons among them have already come back to the parent body.

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[1] A.I.C.C. Economic Review, Vol. VI, No. 21, Whole No. 118, dated March 1, 1955; see speech delivered at the Congress Parliamentary Party meeting at New Delhi on 20.2.'55, published under the title "The New Dynamism".

Other Left Groups

There are some other left groups and parties in India, who stand for socialism, but are not prepared to regard Congress acceptance of socialism as real or genuine. Most of these do not count for much, and even among them, the trudge back to the Congress is discernible. Thus, for example, an entire wing of the Forward Bloc has joined the Congress. Shri Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee, a veteran revolutionary, and the top-most leader of the Revolutionary Socialist Party has joined the Congress with a number of his followers.

Democratic Process Can Achieve Everything In India

It follows from the foregoing discussion that today the National Congress, rich in history, tradition and experience, remains the only party for socialism in India, well in a position to deliver the goods. In his interview with Tibor Munde [1], Nehru was asked a specific question by the French Professor. The question was: "I am under the impression, reading the accounts of your visit to China and Russia, that obviously you are very impressed with what you have seen. If we try to relate this to the democratic, necessarily circumspect progress of law-making and execution in India, what are the conclusions you draw from the impressions of these two visits." Nehru regarded it as a big question, to be discussed later, but added : "I would say this that I do not think as things are in

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[1] Tibor Munde, French author and Professor of Political Science in the University of Paris, interviewed Nehru in December-January, 1955-56. Lucknow's National Herald published a verbatim report of the four interviews lasting six hours in April-May 1956. It is a most valuable report, absolutely indispensable for an understanding of India of today, which reveals hitherto unfathomed depths of Nehru's mind and throws a flood of light for the evaluation of the Congress and Indian National Movement.

India, I mean to say, the influence that our organisation, the Congress, has in India, or I have, there is very little that we cannot get through the democratic process."

Nature Of Congress Socialism—The Profound Impact Of Gandhiji

Congress thus being the party of socialism in India, in this brief discussion, we must now proceed to evaluate the nature of Congress socialism. Congress was profoundly influenced by Mahatma Gandhi, and we have come across the following telling passage in a speech delivered by him at Allahabad as early as 1916,[1] when he had just started his years in India. Gandhiji had said then : "No one has ever suggested that grinding pauperism can lead to anything else but moral degradation. Every human being had a right to live and, therefore, to find the where-withal to feed himself and where necessary clothe and house himself....Indeed, the test of orderliness in a country is not the number of millionaires it owns but of absence of starvation among its masses." Discussing these early years, Tibor Munde had asked Nehru about the impact of the Russian Revolution on him and the National Movement. Nehru said that our sympathies were with Lenin and others, and though not much was known, the feeling was that here was somebody bringing up the underdog. More than this, however, Nehru pointed out : "Gandhi, of course, remember, was always talking of the underdog in his own way, not in the socialist way, not in the class struggle way, but always talking about the underdog, more specially about the peasants of India. So our influence became more and more conditioned to the peasantry of India not so much in the industrial workers but to some extent there too, but more to the peasantry of India and very much against the landlords and the rest. So, in that sense, all of us were powerfully conditioned, socially speaking. Now, the Russian example did not come in the way. It helped us in thinking. We thought we could learn much from it, but merely to adapt our thinking and not to change that basically in that sense."

Socialist Orientation Continues: Nehru's Influence

So Gandhiji, from the earliest years, conditioned the nationalist ranks to the underdog. This orientation, created the ground for the later years, when Nehru's personality towered higher and yet higher over India's freedom fighters and gave clarity and sharpness to these early, peasant-conditioned influence. Nehru's earliest pronouncements[1] breathe of this spirit of revolt against the social system as it obtained. Of these and subsequent years, he told Munde : "I believed more and more in socialism, more and more even in some parts of Communism, not the action part but the theory part of it, a Communist society somewhere in the future, but I always conditioned it—that the method should be peaceful, broadly peaceful and not wrong." "Even in the twenties, in my province, Uttar Pradesh, where I worked chiefly, I was constantly bringing up resolutions encouraging a socialist pattern of society......We became a kind of a certain dynamic influence in the whole big organisation, trying to push it towards socialism, so also others in other parts of the country, but the peaceful means were always there."

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[1] This speech at Allahabad on Dec. 22, 1916, was delivered before the leading lawyers and citizens of Allahabad. A corrected version, in Gandhiji's hand, was lying with the late Dr. Amarnath Jha, from whom it was taken by the well-known journalist, Shri P. D. Tandon, and first published in Lucknow's National Herald in 1946 or 1947. Our quotation is taken from an extract of the speech published in A.I.C.C. Economic Review, Congress Diamond Jubilee Session Number, Vol. VI, No. 18-19, whole No. 115-116 of Jan. 21, 1955, issued on the occasion of the historic Avadi Congress.

This socialist orientation of the nationalist ranks continued in the late twenties. Nehru visited the Soviet Union in 1927 and came back much impressed. His impressions are recorded in a booklet entitled *Soviet Russia*. With his assuming Congress Presidentship in 1929, at the Lahore Congress, when the organisation accepted the objective of complete independence, *Poorna Swaraj,* his propaganda for socialism was intensified. His great popularity, and his unique method of communion with the masses gathered in their thousands and lakhs to listen to him, spread the ideas of socialism in the country. After the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-33, he wrote his famous booklet '*Whither India*', in 1934, which, in fact, represented the thought-currents in the nationalist ranks. The Congress Socialist Party was formed about this time, and socialism became a live thing within the organisation. Nehru's Presidentship of the Lucknow Congress in 1936, and of the subsequent Faizpur Congress, saw further programmatic advances of the Congress towards socialistic principles, though the word socialism was never used.

Gandhiji Emphasises A Fundamental Difference With Western Socialism

During all these years, Gandhiji, who undoubtedly watched these developments, allowed it full play. Never becoming an active participant in propaganda for socialism, he readily accepted its force and validity, and entertained the highest regard for the Congress Socialist leaders. He, of course, sounded a note of warning in 1934, and what he said then, and subsequently also, profoundly influenced Congress socialism. He said on 2.8.'34 : "Socialism and communism of the West are based on certain conceptions which are fundamentally different from ours. One such conception is their belief in the essential selfishness of human nature. I do not subscribe to it, for I know that the essential difference between man and the brute is that the former can respond to the call of the spirit in him, can rise superior to the passions that he owns in common with the brute and, therefore, superior to selfishness and violence, which belong to the brute nature and not to the immortal spirit of man. That is fundamental conception of Hinduism, which has years of penance and austerity at the back of discovery of this truth. That is why, whilst we have had saints who have worn out their bodies and laid down their lives in order to explore the secrets of the soul, we have had none, as in the West, who laid down their lives in exploring the remotest or the highest regions of the earth. Our socialism or communism should, therefore, be based on nonviolence and on harmonious co-operation."

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[1] The earliest recorded thing we have come across is a statement made by him on May 17, 1922, before an Allahabad Magistrate, when he was sentenced, under Sections 385 and 505 of the Indian Penal Code to a term of 18 months rigorous imprisonment for having declared his intention to picket foreign shops in a public speech. We have it in a publication entitled **Jawaharlal Nehru: Statements, Speeches and Writings**, published by L. Ram Mohan Lal, University Road, Allahabad, 1929. Nehru had said in the course of this statement : "....and the poor down-trodden kisans with the haunted hopeless look in their eyes, working away like the beast of the field from morning to night fall, so that others may enjoy the fruits of their labour. We have seen them harassed and made utterly miserable till life became almost too heavy to be borne."

The Pre-War Years: Radicalisation Of Congress

After the historic Lucknow Congress, presided over by Nehru, which brought about deep-rooted and far-reaching changes in the Congress programmatically, and before the outbreak of World War II in 1939, in the three-years which intervened, the National Congress became a great forum for socialistic debates. The National Congress then had within its fold all the anti-imperialist elements in the country, irrespective of their ideologies. The Congress Socalists were there, were members of Working Committe, the Communists had joined it and the late M. N. Roy was also there, as also late Swami Sahjanand, the great Kisan leader of Bihar. Sessions of the All India Congress Committee during those days used to be historic occasions, noted for very high levels of the debates, in which views clashed with great dignity and decorum. The left elements often combined to direct their fire on the leadership, though never had the better of it, but in the net result socialism more and more became the consciousness of vast Congress ranks and the masses, and the Congress as such was more and more radicalised.

Differences, Dissensions And *Esprit De Corps*

This steady and sure orientation of Congress towards socialism was, however, not without dissent or difference. In fact, this dissensions in the top leadership was a feature even in early thirties, and for a poignant expression of this phase, the reader may refer to an angry letter Nehru wrote to Gandhiji. It has been published as appendix to Tendulkar's book. It was written during a period of ten days interlude outside jail, when Kamlaji was very sick. Nehru refers to it in his interview with Munde. "The Congress Working Committee had passed some resolutions rather condemnatory of socialism, or socialistic attitudes. I said 'what is this' and all that. It is a very angry letter, a long letter." There occur some striking passages in his *Autobiography* also. In fact, Munde asked Nehru a very specific question : Did he see a "social strategy and liberation streategy" in Gandhiji's ideas? Nehru replied that the social aspect was there from the beginning, "of fighting certain vested interests, not in the social class struggle way but nevertheless fighting for something." But doubts really came in regard to the social aspect "because I was not quite sure that our colleagues were so socially conscious. It was not about the method—the method was effective enough—but were our colleagues as anxious for social change as I wanted them to be." But Gandhiji was there, "it became a kind of *esprit de corps,*" the leadership "held together, that is, we developed a way of finding some common way for us. There was give and take in our attitudes....... We did not easily split up as leftist movements or Socialist movements do, on theoretical or ideological grounds."

Post-Independence Years

Congress, indeed, retained its broad-based character when World War II broke out following which the social aspect was relegated to the background in the last bid for Independence. In post-Indepence period, after the first few years of tackling immediate problems like those of refugees, it was but natural that the socialist orientation of pre-War years should assert itself and two historic documents published officially by the Congress, namely, *Report of the Congress Economic Programme Committee* (1948) and *Report of the Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee* (1949) expressed the new ideas in no uncertain terms. Later, faced with problems of national planning, it became abundantly clear that planning in a backward economy like that of India can only be socialist, and the culmination was the historic Avadi Resolution.

Criticism Of Avadi Resolution

Formal acceptance of socialist objective by the Congress has been subjected to two types of criticisms. One, that it is not seriously meant, that it is a move to 'hoodwink' the masses. This criticism has been answered more than once. In his letter to P.C.C. Presidents dated 9.3.55 [1], Nehru said : "Let it be fully realised by all that we are deadly serious about what we have said and that it is up to the Congress now to redeem this pledge that we have taken in all its fulness." The second criticism is that Congress socialism is 'confused', is not 'clear-cut', etc. The answer to this charge would be found in the Avadi resolution itself which said that our objective was the "establishment of a socialistic pattern of society, where the principal means of production are under social ownership and control, production is progressively speeded up and there is equitable distribution of the national wealth." The fifth resolution of Avadi Congress, dealing with economic policy, goes into further details of the socialist economy that is aimed at.

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[1] See A.I.C.C. Economic Review, Vol. VI, No. 22 of March 15, 1955.

Specific Indian Character

So the charge of confusion and indecision cannot stand on firm ground. Of course, the need for further clarifications may be there. But then such clarifications need not follow the forms adopted in Western socialist political controversies, the polemical phase of writing by Marx, Engels and Lenin, or by lesser controversialists in later phases. Indeed, Congress socialism, having gradually evolved and not doctrinaire, and Congress being traditionally tolerant and broad-based, the unfolding of its socialist policies would also have a specific Indian character and form, to which we shall now turn our attention, since the role of Village Panchayats can only then be firmly fixed.

Welcoming the Soviet guests in the Central Hall of Parliament on November 21, 1955, Vice-President Dr. S. Radhakrishnan said : "It is irrelevant today to pose Marxist doctrines or Leninist theories against logic of events and logic of facts which are far more powerful. Today, India is attempting to recast her society on a socialistic pattern. India is trying to bring about a socialistic pattern of society in a peaceful and non-violent way. It has taken other nations generations to become socialistic. All countries might not reach socialism the same way. India's path is one consistent with her tradition, arising out of her background, through non-violence and democratic process."

This specific Indian aspect was thus emphasised by Nehru in a Report he submitted to the All India Congress Committee at Avadi on 19.1.'55, on relinquishing office as Congress President. He said : "Socialism has many connotations. It is neither necessary nor desireable for us to have a rigid and dogmatic approach in this matter; it is still less desirable for us to imitate what has been said or done in the name of socialism in other countries, where conditions were wholly different. There are bound to be common features and certain common principles which can be applied everywhere. But every country must proceed on its own lines and according to its own genius. More especially so in the case of India which has a very strong personality and historical background and tradition. It was out of that background and tradition that our freedom movement arose, and this struggle itself has conditioned us today."

Shri Dhebar On Approach To The Question Of Property

What then are these basically Indian concepts? First is the approach to the question of property as such. Gandhiji always regarded property and wealth of the rich people as something lying with them in trust for people's good. Shri U. N. Dhebar has expressed himself thus on the question [1] : "We have approached the question of property from the narrow angle so far. Even nations have considered the question of property in that narrow light of its use to the individuals. Some kind of religion has grown around the present concept of property and there are people in this world who attach today not only an economic importance to it but also give it a kind of religious sanctity, thus blessing the property and its uses by its owners regardless of its consequences on the society as a whole. It is true that, situated as we are, we shall have to utilise some medium of exchange for our day to day life. But to give this exchange and the savings from the exchange a religious colour will defeat its own object. In a world full of utter poverty and misery, we cannot lend religious sanctity to surpluses in the hands of a few. Strictly religious or ethical considerations on the contrary would want those surpluses to be immediately distributed amongst the needy. The only approach to the question of property that is reasonable and rational, therefore, is that it is utilised for the service of the people—and this service not in the narrow sense of fulfilling some economic responsibility but in its widest possible sense—the sense in which a mother looks after the needs of her children, service born of devotion and love, born of desire to see that every brother and sister in India is enabled to develop his or her personality to the fullest extent."

Means And Ends

Next is the question of means. During the last few months of his life, Mahatma Gandhi expressed himself on the question of socialism and the means for achieving it in a striking note in *Harijan* of 13.7.'47. Said Gandhiji : "Socialism is a beautiful word, and so far as I am aware, in socialism all the members of society are equal —none low, none high. In the individual body, nor are the soles of the feet low because they touch the earth. Even as members of the individual body are equal, so are the members of society. This is socialism. In it the prince and the peasant, the wealthy and the poor, the employer and the employee are all on the same level. In order to reach this state we may not look on things philosophically and say that we need not make a move until all are converted to socialism. Without changing our life we may go on giving addresses, forming parties and hawk-like seize the game when it comes our way. This is no socialism. The more we treat it as game to be seized, the farther it must recede from us. Socialism begins with the first convert. If there is one such, you can add zeroes to the one and the first zero will account for ten and every addition will account for ten times the previous number. If, however, the beginner is a zero, in other words, no one makes the beginning, multiplicity of zeroes will also produce zero value. Time and paper occupied in writing zeroes will be so much waste.

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[1] A.I.C.C. Economic Review, Vol. VI, No. 23, dated April 1, 1955.

"This socialism is as pure as crystal. It, therefore, requires crystal-like means to achieve it. Impure means result in an impure end. Hence the prince and the peasant will not be equalised by cutting off the prince's head, nor can the process of cutting off equalize the employer and the employed. One cannot reach truth by untruthfulness. Therefore, only truthful, non-violent and pure-hearted socialists will be able to establish a socialistic society in India and the world. To my knowledge there is no country in the world which is purely socialistic. Without the means described above the existence of such a society is impossible."

Nehru is never tired of repeating this aspect of Gandhiji's teachings. In the Report he submitted to the All India Congress Committee at Avadi, he said : "The basic lesson that Mahatma Gandhi taught us was that means govern ends and that we should never adopt wrong means even for right ends. Perhaps many of the troubles of the world today are due to the fact that no importance is attached to means. I do believe in the fundamental rightness of the principle that Gandhiji laid before us, even though we may not always be able to live up to it. But, apart from ethical theory, even practical wisdom and self-interest in the widest sense have demonstrated the worth of following the path laid down for us by Gandhiji."

Avoidance Of Conflicts

From this basic approach follows the emphasis on avoidance of conflicts, on peaceful change. In the Report cited above, after pointing out how the above policy has paid rich dividends in India's handling of foreign affairs, Nehru refers to its application in Indian conditions. He said : "We know that there are class divisions and struggle and that vested interests resist any change to their disadvantage. Any attempt at reform, whether political or social, brings about a clash of these conflicting interests. It is not by denial or non-recognition of these conflicting interests that we proceed. But, at the same time, we do not encourage and intensify these conflicts because we are convinced that ultimately the surest and the best way of solving them is through peaceful methods and by a friendly approach. Where there is a conflict of interest, the good of the people as a whole must prevail. While this must be so, it is not necessary to aim at injuring others or to spread the spirit of hatred and violence. Out of hatred and violence no good can ultimately come."

In his own inimitable way, in a letter addressed to P.C.C. Presidents on 9.3.'55, to which we have made a reference earlier in this Chapter, Nehru again expressed himself with great clarity on the question : "We realise, of course, that the interest of various groups in the country clash, that there are class conflicts, that the interest of a landowner is not the same as the interest of his tenant, the interest of the owner of a factory is not the same as that of the workers there. We do not ignore this clash of interests because it is patently there and to ignore it would be to ignore reality. But, nevertheless, we do not encourage class conflicts, as some people do, but try to resolve them or, at any rate, to lessen them. That does not mean that we should weaken in any way in our resolve or tone down our objective. That objective must be kept absolutely clear and everything has to be judged from the yardstick of the good it does to the masses of our people, and how far it takes us in the direction of the pattern of society that we aim at. If vested interests come in the way, they have to be removed; but in doing so we pursue the friendly and co-operative way, because we mean ill to no one and because we realise that ultimately the good of the individual or the group can only come fully when the whole nation and our three hundred and sixty million people advance. Therefore, the test is always the good of the masses of our people. This combination of firm adherence to principle and objective, and yet a friendly approach even to those who differ and whose interests clash with that objective, is the way that Gandhiji taught us. It is in keeping with the genius of India."

Decentralisation—The Keynote Of Indian Socialism

The next most important aspect of Indian socialism is the emphasis on decentralisation. This again flows from India's ancient history, and was emphasised tirelessly by Gandhiji. Through immemorial centuries India had a system of differentiated functions as between State and Society as different entities operating within specified limits. Little communities living in villages were communes holding in solution a lot of socialism and communism. The very fact that they continued to exist through long centuries of our history in harmony with the State speaks a lot in their favour. In the development of Congress policies, the Panchayats in villages, which give body and form to a system of decentralised administration, always had a prominent place. This Congress thought has found concrete expression in our Constitution. The Planning Commission has laid emphasis on planning from below. In the Second Five-Year Plan, Panchayats have been assigned a definite place.

Forging The Sanction Of Enlightened Masses:

Vinoba On The Power Of Love

Vinoba has said[1]: "Today we are busy in national planning. In fact we require village planning. People of the village should exercise their own brain to do things. Should somebody err only one village would suffer. But when the stewardship of the whole country is entrusted to four or five persons the whole country has to suffer the consequences of their one single mistake. But this will not be so when power resides in the village itself. If one village commits a certain blunder another would not repeat it. Hence power should be distributed in every village."

The place of Village Panchayats in India's march towards socialism would thus follow from the nature of Indian socialism we have attempted to discuss above. If the means have to be peaceful and non-violent, and if conflict is to be avoided and progress achieved through harmony and goodwill, then the role of Panchayats cannot be overemphasised. Be it noted that the battle for India's socialism will have to be won, by and large, in our villages. Conflicts and violence are more rampant there, between the different agricultural classes, than between the capitalist and worker in the cities. The progressive industrial legislations and other policies being energetically pursued by the Government have very much minimised the chances of any violent revolutionary conflagration by the workers in big industrial centres. But the same cannot be said of the villages. Here conscious attempts will have to be made for establishment of harmony and ending of conflicts. And this task there will have to be achieved through what Vinoba has called 'the power of love' and by 'forging the sanction of enlightened masses.' Said Vinoba at Sarvodaya Conference at Chandil in Bihar in 1954: "There is then such a power as love in the hearts of men which enriches human life. Man lives on love, he is born through love and through love is he sustained in his life, and finally when he makes ready to depart from here and looks around to catch a sight of his dear ones, it is love which consoles him and strengthens him to start on his unknown journey.

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[1] See article in A.I.C.C. Economic Review, Vol. VI, Nos. 6-7, Whole No. 103-104, of June 24, 1954.

"If inspite of such overwhelming evidence of the power of love on every side, I do not endeavour to enlarge the bounds of this force so as to make it the basis of social life, if instead I merely keep harping on legislation, I fail to discharge my duty and I falsify the hope of the Government. I, therefore, want to devote myself to the creation of *Jan-Shakti*, the forging of the sanction of enlightened masses—a power which is opposed to the force of violence and different from the authority of the State."

Decentralisation And The Communist World

We have, therefore, to bear in mind the decentralisation aspect of Indian socialism. This point, emphasised by Gandhiji and the Congress since the very beginning, has become a noticeable feature in the socialist countries of Russia and China. In fact, the entire experience of Stalin's exposure by the Soviet Communist Party leadership emphasises the need for decentralisation in planning and in building socialism. While the great advances made by the Soviet Union under the type of system that developed there after 1917 cannot be denied, the fact that under this system the greatest leader could degenerate into a veritable tyrant, against whom others who constituted the leadership could do nothing even when they were conscious of his tyrannies and murders, reveals the defects of the system as nothing else does. We shudder to think of the countless numbers of Soviet citizens who may have thus been sacrificed because of the whims of a leader described by Khruschev as 'capricious.' The entire experience confirms the dire necessity of building up socialism on a decentralised basis. Edward Kardelj, Vice-President of Yugoslavia and the leading Yugoslav Communist theoretician has said : "No central leadership whatever, no matter how wise it may be, could alone totally direct economic and other development." It is hardly surprising that in the new context of things, Marshal Tito and the Yugoslav Communist movement, which decided upon a policy of decentralised building up of socialism as early as 1948, which in fact became one of the causes for their break with the Stalinist Cominform, have proved to be wiser, and realising the errors, the Soviet Communist leadership has hastened to make amends. Mr. Bogdan Crnobrnja, Yugoslav Ambassador in India, in an article specially written for the Amritsar Session Special Number of the *A.I.C.C. Economic Review*, has given a brief and clear account of Yugoslav view on planning. Crnobrnja's this refreshing and thought-provoking note, touches upon various chords which find an echo in Indian hearts. Planning in Yugoslavia is based upon "specific conditions prevailing" there, and understanding these conditions "is as important as the building up of socialism itself." No plan should be designed to "foresee" the production and distribution to the last particular (from the number and the price of the needles to the number and price of the locomotives produced). The "material social impulses" for development, among others, has to be derived "through the largest possible local self-government."

In fact, the entire experience and convulsion of the Communist world, following the exposure of Stalin, is a subject which needs a detailed treatment, but we cannot do so here. It confirms that the path of building socialism through peaceful means, avoiding conflicts, and a decentralised system, which India had adopted, is the most correct path.

Essential Pre-requisites For The Success Of Indian Socialism

But there are a few points which have to be borne in mind in order that this Indian experiment may succeed. The first point is that the pace of social legislation for the removal of inequalities must be quickened and actively implemented. Shri Dhebar said at Amritsar : "Three conditions are indispensable to the attainment of the goal of socialism—equality of opportunities, increased production and equitable distribution."

There is yet another aspect. The Marxist hold to the view that it is the party of the working class which alone can build up socialism. That under the dictatorship of the proletariat spectacular successes have been achieved, and that in spite of the growth of the 'personality cult', this proletarian leadership has not at long last hesitated to denounce and utterly expose Stalin, the personification of the 'cult', are facts which cannot be denied. It has been said that the Congress organisation, the party of Indian socialism, has no ideological unity, has persons of widely different views, and so cannot be an effective instrument for building up socialism. Its "class character" is recalled to prove its incapacity as an instrument of socialism.

While not standing for regimented ideas, we nevertheless feel that certain minimum ideological standards must be enforced in order to make Congress capable of achieving its task. Confused thinking undoubtedly is there. There are old-timers who raise five fingers and say that since these are not equal, social equality is not possible. There are yet others who believe in this life being a result of previous life, and so hardly anything to complain since we are being done by as we did before. These and other woolly thoughts persist and prevail. There is also an absence of organisational compactness. For trimming the organisation in order to make it the effective instrument of socialism, an organisational clean-up at all levels, from top to bottom, is called for. The Congress leadership is well conscious of it. Arrangements are being made to train up cadres. The process has to be intensified and sharpened. For, be it borne in mind, in the organisation of Panchayats, which have ultimately to develop as organs of socialism in rural India, the Congress workers will have to take a big hand. To the extent the task is undertaken with sincerity and earnestness, to that extent the results will be beneficial, and the march towards socialism successful.

Revolution As A Continuity

We will conclude this Chapter with a telling quotation from Nehru's interview with Munde. "Gandhi", said Nehru, "a tremendous revolutionary force in India, conceived of revolution as a continuity, not as a break. His language was one of continuity, and when it sought to break, it was one of continuity. Therefore, in the popular mind, he is a tremendous link between all the past powers of India and all the future revolutions of India. There is no break between them and that is a great factor because other revolutions, other methods of revolutions, have always thought in terms of a break, and then it goes back as a reaction to the process of continuity. Now, in India,to a large extent, that contrast, antithesis, has been avoided chiefly because of Gandhi. In fact Gandhi was a far greater revolutionary, I think, in India than people who talk of revolution, and that has been a tremendous stabilising feature in the changes that have come about and everyone in India has been influenced by that. Even our most reactionary people in India, socially reactionary I mean, are not so rigid in their reaction as probably in Europe or America. Even our most advanced people in India, whatever they may be, even Communists and others, are influenced by Gandhi. Somehow there are common links created by Gandhi between conflicting elements in India. I don't say that conflicts are avoided that way, but the door is always open, and remember also that Gandhi was absolutely unbending when it came to giving up a principle, when it came to surrendering a vital position. But he never closed the doors to the other party entering and talking to him and discussing matters."

We would request all to bear this in mind in evaluating Indian socialism and its progress.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

PANCHAYATS AND MOBILISATION OF COMMUNITY SPIRIT AND RURAL MAN-POWER FOR DEVELOPMENT

> *"We in India are living in a period when we have to face a fast-changing world. We have to uplift our 36 crores of people. We and our country will be judged not by a handful of prosperous men but by the condition in which the poorest of the poor finds himself. The time has come now for hard, gruelling work and no longer can softness of any kind be tolerated. Eighty to ninety per cent of our people are backward and needy. We should uplift them all. Land should belong to the tillers. Old relations in the sphere of trade, industry and land are fast changing and it would be utter folly for some people to try to hang on to old relationships.*
>
> *"People with the 'coat and necktie' mentality would hardly have any place in this new India. There is hard work for the people in this country and I want everybody to get into the thick of it in right earnest. There is too much of fashion and well-to-do women seem to have no work and are accustomed to wear silk and chiffon. This is not correct. People who display well are not today considered in the world as high or mighty. Today that person is honoured who works and labours and lives simply and identifies himself with the poorest of the poor....It is height of indecency for some people to be soft and to wallow in sloth and luxury."*[1]
>
> *—JAWAHARLAL NEHRU*
>
> *"Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads! Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut? Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee!*
>
> *"He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the path-maker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and shower, and His garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy mantle and even like Him come down on the dusty soil!*
>
> *"Deliverance? Where is this deliverance to be found? Our Master Himself has joyfully taken upon Him the bond of creation; He is bound with us all for ever!*
>
> *"Come out of thy meditations and leave aside thy flowers and incense! What harm is there if clothes become tattered and stained? Meet Him and stand by Him in toil and in sweat of thy brow."*[2]
>
> *—RABINDRANATH TAGORE*

PROBLEMS of development, tangled in character and colossal in magnitude, face us in India as also our neighbours in Asia. Our backwardness and frightening under-development, as a result of years of colonial domination, cry for immediate redress. The first and the immediate task is to provide for the minimum requirements of civilised society—food, cloth and shelter. We do not propose here to even cursorily examine these needs. Our Planning Commission has done the job for the Nation.

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[1] From Speech at Dalhousie, Punjab in August 1954. (**A.I.C.C. Economic Review**, Vol. VI, No. 8, whole No. 105, dated Aug. 15, 1954).

[2] From **Gitanjali**.

While the requirements are so pressing, the resources at our disposal are distressingly meagre. The situation calls for not mere solutions, but speedy and quick solutions, and demands immediate results and benefits, observable and enjoyable by the mass of people.

Need To Harness Unleashed Mass Energy

Predominantly agricultural as the country is, the first task, of course, has to be the abolition of old feudal fetters, involving in some form or other parasitism on land, or what may be called the unearned incomes from land. Given a democratic set-up, this task is not difficult of achievement through democratic, parliamentary processes, as is evident from our successes in the direction in the course of the last few years.

It would, however, be the greatest miscalculation to imagine that mere abolition of these unearned incomes and intermediary systems would solve our problems. Even when this is achieved, and even providing that such abolition is followed by the most progressive type of tenancy legislations conferring the maximum security of tenure on the cultivating population, even after that the situation will continue to be desperate.

Such steps would no doubt unleash mass enthusiasm, provide the huge chunk of humanity concentrated in our villages with hope and confidence, and create the necessary atmosphere for the next step. But unless conscious steps are taken to harness this unleashed mass energy, to give them a set trend and direction, to canalise them into peaceful and constructive channels, we shall fail to meet the requirements for development.

The Development Requirements: A Multi-Purpose Programme

What, then, are these development requirements?

In rather generalised form this has been thus described by the U.N. Mission on Community Organisation and Development for South and South-East Asia[1]: "We take the main purpose of economic development to be to increase real income per head of population, which of course implies improvement in health, education, recreation, and social and economic security." The Mission has rightly emphasised that "the main requirement is to increase natural productive power in excess of population increase." The emphasis, for the time being, is, therefore, "on the conditions necessary to increase productive power."

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[1] **Report of the Mission on Community Organisation and Development in South and South-East Asia** by Prof. Horace Belshaw and Dr. John B. Grant, United Nations Publication, 1953; p. 13.

More concretely, in terms of our villages, the achievement of this objective would involve a multi-purpose programme of development, which would include the following :

(i) medical relief, maternity and child welfare, opening of hospitals and dispensaries;

(ii) general sanitation of the entire area involving regulation, cleansing, removing and disposal of sullage, sewage, etc., and including preventive and curative measures against outbreak of epidemics;

(iii) regulating places for disposal of dead bodies of human beings, animals and other offensive matter;

(iv) regulating the construction of latrines, urinals, water-closets, drains, etc., with powers to remove, alter, repair, cleanse and disinfect the above mentioned, including cess-pools;

(v) veterinary relief and management and control of cattle pounds;

(vi) construction, repair, maintenance, sanitation and lighting of village streets, pathways, lanes, etc.;

(vii) construction and repair of drinking water wells, public washing and bathing spots and regulating sources of supply of drinking water, including pipe water supply if possible, prohibition of bathing, washing, etc., in any public water supply sources set apart for drinking;

(viii) construction of roads, buildings of bridges, culverts, etc., between villages, including approach roads to highways, planting of trees on roadsides and other places;

(ix) establishment of libraries, reading rooms, recreation grounds, children's parks, etc., establishment and maintenance of primary and high-grade schools;

(x) watch and ward of the village including crops therein;

(xi) construction of irrigation channels and other minor irrigation schemes, deepening and maintenance of village irrigation tanks;

(xii) crop experiments and general improvement of agricultural production through use of better seeds, manure, etc.;

(xiii) organisation of co-operatives for sale, purchase and credit, generally to aim at the organisation of multi-purpose co-operatives;

(xiv) organisation of co-operative farming;

(xv) improvement of cattle-breeding and general care of live-stock; and

(xvi) promotion and development of cottage industries and other subsidiary occupations.

This list, by no means exhaustive, illustrates the main lines along which an all-round development of the village has to take place in order to bring about visible changes in the life of the people within the course of a few years through sustained and persistent effort.

The Significance Of Mutual Aid And Community Effort

It is obvious that such a programme of development covers the entire village community and can hope for success only when it receives the willing and hearty co-operation of the entire village population.

It has further to be borne in mind that the above programme does not involve huge capital expenditure but is of a type which, with state encouragement and proper guidance, can be, to a large extent, achieved by the collective effort of the community.

It is here, then, where mutual aid and community effort acquire their great importance and significance, pregnant with immense possibilities and capable of facing the tangled and colossal problems which face our villages and cry for solution.

Fortunately, our village communities have age-old traditions of community organisation and common endeavour. In modern parlance, our village population used to be a working mutual-aid team, and the community spirit used to be dominant.

"Reconciling A Common Plan And Order Of Cultivation"

We have, in Book I, referred to this aspect of our villages in bygone days. Maine characterised the system as "one of common enjoyment by village communities, and, inside those communities, by families." Again, the following comment by Maine, pregnant with meaning for the present period and for the subject under discussion, needs to be noted : "The object of the rules governing the proceedings of the cultivators is to reconcile a common plan and order of cultivation on the part of the whole brotherhood with the holding of distinct lots in the arable land by separate families.

The common life of the group or community has been so far broken up as to admit private property in cultivated land, but not so far as to allow departure from a joint system of cultivating that land."

"Reconciling a common plan and order of cultivation on the part of the whole brotherhood"—this is exactly what we also aim at today. And though village community functioning ceased due to a variety of reasons, we must never forget that traditions die hard, and the traditions which our village communities have inherited since ancient times must be regarded as a great heritage bequeathed to us from the past, which can easily be revived and made into a powerful instrument for social progress and common good. This, indeed, is cur great asset today.

Gandhiji On "A Free And Voluntary Play Of Mutual Forces"

It follows, therefore, that our efforts must aim at making every village self-sustained and capable of managing its own affairs. It involves that we develop an awareness and consistently appreciate the key importance of the small community. Village community must come to be the primary unit of all our plans. Progress would, to a large extent, depend on the existence of an active organisation in the village which will command the confidence of the community and will have enough prestige and influence to rally the village for common programmes to be carried out with the assistance of the administration. It should further be borne in mind that while the village will have to be the primary unit of our plans, within the village the primary social and economic unit is the family composed of the various individuals of the household. Referring to this aspect of village community organisation, Mahatma Gandhi said in July 1946: "Thus, ultimately it is the individual who is the unit. But this does not exclude dependence on the willing help from the neighbour or from the world. It will be free and voluntary play of mutual forces. Such a society is necessarily highly cultured in which every man and woman knows what he or she wants, and, what is more, knows that no one should want anything that the others cannot have with equal labour."

Need To Develop The Village Leadership: The Basic Factors

Under the conditions of today, such a *free and voluntary play of mutual forces* can be brought about only through developing mutual aid in the village and through a strong community spirit. And this brings us to the crux of the question—the development of leadership at the village level. In olden days the village council constituted such a village leadership commanding the loyalty of the village community and administering affairs of common interest without fear or favour. In the new efforts that are now being made to create such a leadership in the village, we must see that this is provided by an organised body, which one might well call a body of democratically chosen leaders of the village.

It would not be difficult to statutorily provide for such village bodies. Almost every State in our vast country has its Village Panchayat legislation. But mere legislation will not be enough. It may, at the most, provide an elected panel in each village, but that by itself will not confer upon it the prestige and the authority which it must have in order to effectively organise mutual aid in the village. Elections can set up village bodies, may assist in creating consciousness of a new responsibility, but cannot make them effective organs for village development. In fact, setting up of an authority, lacking capacity and with little scope for work may have a demoralising effect. The basic factors which will make such village bodies effective are :

(i) availability of adequate recurring resources;
(ii) administrative capacity at village level;
(iii) sense of civic responsibility; and
(iv) effective co-ordination with and support from the administration and the Government.

Need For Effective State Intervention

Under the conditions of illiteracy, ignorance, poverty and backwardness which obtain in our villages, it is of the utmost importance to realise that the object in view cannot be achieved unless the State effectively intervenes to help in the creation of the village leadership.

As the *Report of the Congress Village Panchayat Committee* has observed : "It is apparent that conscious creation by the State of statutory village bodies entails upon it heavy burdens and responsibilities. In the present conditions of backwardness and illiteracy in our villages, the State will have to largely foster their growth. Once the village communities have been allotted a specific place in our social organism, it becomes essential to supervise their work without in any way interfering in their basic functions."

The problems relating to the creation of such village bodies are manifold in character and deserve close study and assimilation in order that it may be possible to more properly lay down their future course. Efforts in this direction in widely different and separate tracts have yielded, and will yield, rich experience which must be pooled together. Thus alone it will be possible to continually improve upon their constitution and lay down in clearer terms the direction of State intervention.

Encouraging Results Of The Panchayat Experiment

The great experiment which has been undertaken has nevertheless shown, on the whole, very encouraging results. We have referred to them in our State Chapters. To give only one instance, the total value of the work done by the Gaon Sabhas of the State of Uttar Pradesh has amounted to nearly Rs. 9.45 crores. Of this, Rs. 3.5 crores was contributed in cash and the remainder in the shape of voluntary labour for implementation of various self-help schemes. At other places, the success may not have been so encouraging and the situation at places is fluid. As the U.N. Mission's Report has said: "There are instances of growing pains." Very serious problems face the village body relating to planning, organisation, mobilisation of popular effort and the like. What is important is that the implications of encouraging such bodies should be thoroughly understood, for, among other things, they basically involve decentralisation of political and economic power. While the general principle of the desirability and utility of mutual aid and community spirit is almost universally accepted, the far reaching consequences of a serious effort to develop it have to be thoroughly realised and grasped, for only then their genuine implementation would be possible and their place fixed in our development plans.

Enormous Potentiality Of Rural Man-Power

Talking of development, we invariably come up against the problem of resources. Our resources are extremely limited and underdeveloped. We have, however, an unlimited resource of manpower. We have unemployment in the rural areas. In this connection the U.N. Mission's *Report on Community Organisation in South and South-East Asia* has brought to light a most interesting information. It says: "For the whole of Asia the number of idle days has been estimated at 30,000 million working days, which is a stupendous total, representing about one third of the total days actually worked in Asian countries. Even if the estimate is 50 per cent out, it indicates the enormous potentialities for improvement, if this reserve could be organised and put to use, especially through self-help activities."

We got concrete expression of this "enormous potentiality" in a Report submitted to the Government of India on "River Valley Projects in China," by an official delegation specially sent for the purpose, headed by Mr. Kanwar Sain, Chairman, Central Water and Power Commission of the Government of India. Says the Report:

"One of the most important and largest irrigation canals constructed in China is the main irrigation canal of North Kiangsu, intended for irrigation of 4 million acres and navigation and regulation of flood. The bed width of the canal is 420 ft., with a carrying capacity of 25,000 cusecs. The entire length of 100 miles of this canal involving 247 crores cft. of earthwork was completed in the course of 80 days. That is, every day 3 crore cft. of earthwork were done. There was no machinery and the entire earthwork including excavation, transport and temping was done by human labour. The finished work is neat and the canal is functioning efficiently. Such speed of construction of earthwork on canals has not been achieved in India or anywhere else in the world even with the help of heavy earthwork equipment."

India's Finance Minister, Shri C. D. Deshmukh, addressing the informal meeting of the All India Congress Comittee held at New Delhi in September 1955 to discuss the Plan-Frame, drew pointed attention to the utilisation of rural man-power as a valuable means of raising resources for the Plan. He said :[1] "There is the question of voluntary association of people with development projects. This certainly refers to the non-monetised sector. In this country, actually *Shramdan* has always been given. In the course of the First Plan we have taken good care to stimulate the spirit. If I am not mistaken, in our Community Projects nearly 40 to 50 crores worth of work has been done through *Shramdan*. It has taken the deepest roots in Uttar Pradesh. We have to further augment this tendency, and I can say that it is a growing tendency in our country."

We submit that encouraging as this picture is, we have yet to make much more concerted efforts for tapping the enormous potentiality of rural man-power. The *Shramdan* movement, as it has been called, has undoubtedly caught the imagination of the people. A *Shramdan* fortnight was observed in Rajasthan from May 26 to June 8, 1956. There was great enthusiasm all over the State and very useful work was done for village development. While a tabulated account of work done in this years' *Shramdan* fortnight is not yet available, the picture of achievements of the *Shramdan* fortnight of 1955 is encouraging as would be found below:

NAME OF THE WORK	NO.
New wells for drinking water	680
Cattle pounds and cattle sheds	40
Repairs of drinking water wells	321
Irrigation wells	7
Pavement of streets and *khurahs*	283
Village sanitation drive	587

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[1] A.I.C.C. Economic Review, Second Five-Year Plan Special Number, Vol. VII, Nos. 10-11, Whole Nos. 131-132, dated September 23, 1955, p. 50.

Culverts	595
Schools buildings	352
Roads (in miles)	951
Repairs and construction of tanks & bunds	664
Nadies	443
Recreation centres	88

Value of all work done through *Shramdan* last year has been estimated at Rs. 49 lakhs.

Panchayats And Community Projects

In the mobilisation of community spirit and rural man-power, the Panchayats have played and are destined to play a great role. Of course, they need constant encouragement and help of the State.

Today Community Projects and National Extension Blocks are spreading wider and wider all over India. Prime Minister Nehru said on 18.4.'53 : "The Community programme constitutes the dynamo providing the motive force for the successful implementation of the Five-Year Plan. The whole object of the community development programme was to raise the general level of the standard of living of the average man—an object which in the Indian context was quite a revolutionary thing. Whether they could bring about this revolution in a peaceful, co-operative way was of the highest importance, because violent methods demanded a tremendous initial price and their ultimate outcome was totally uncertain. In a fast changing world, India stood out as something solid but unless the people worked hard this solidity would fade away. They had, therefore, to be wary and strive hard to maintain and strengthen the country's independence through economic development, which was basic and fundamental. The Five-Year Plan, because of the limitations of available resources, did not go very far, but its approach was excellent. The effort of the people should be to make it go further. In this effort, the Community Programme and the National Extension Service, which would be shortly finalized, had a very vital role to play. If through the operation of these programmes a change of outlook among the people was generated, the country would have gone a very long way, because with people's outlook changed, the pace of progress would be much faster."

Since then, time and again Shri Nehru has called the Community Project schemes as the most revolutionary thing being done in India today, as through this the face of rural India is slowly but certainly being changed. The relationship between Panchayats and Community Projects has been discussed time and again. Community Projects are essentially attempts to rouse the community spirit in a Development Block for intensive rural development, of course, with State aid and active support. There is a fund of literature available on the subject and it is not necessary for us to go into a discussion of the various aspects of the Community Project programme. We hold that Community Projects are likely to prove more successful in those areas where active Panchayats exist and co-operate with the Project work. The reason is simple. Panchayats, being local elected bodies representing the people, are in a better position to rouse mass enthusiasm and support than the Project officers and workers who may or may not belong to the area. We are happy to find that this contention is fully supported by the latest Report of the Programme Evaluation Organisation of the Planning Commission on the third year's working of the Community Projects and National Extension Service published in May 1956. The following observations of the Report deserve the greatest attention of all concerned: "It is now widely recognised that for carrying out development functions of any type on continuing basis, only a representative body like the Panchayat should be responsible and all efforts should be directed towards creating and strengthening these institutions." The progress of the programme and public co-operation has been on a much better scale where well-constituted Panchayats existed than in areas where such agencies were absent. The Report further points out that by taking up constructive work, the Panchayats themselves have benefited inasmuch as they have risen high in the estimation of the people of the area. The Report which pleads for wider responsibility and powers for the local bodies, further says that the provision of adequate financial assistance alone will not be sufficient to enable Panchayats to discharge their responsibilities. Guidance and active assistance will also be necessary for a considerable period before the Panchayats actively discharge the responsibilities put on them. The Report pleads for greater flexibility of form and organisational structure for these local bodies and allowing the patterns to evolve with experience. "The traditional Panchayats would be untenable, in the greatly changed and rapidly changing pattern of social organisations. It must be realised that new institutions can flourish only if they are in accord with the new emerging social structure," observes the Report.

A Lok Sabha Debate

The relationship of Panchayats and Community Projects came up for discussion in the Lok Sabha in March 1956 on Shri Raghubir Sahay's motion on the Community Projects and the National Extension Service Schemes. Members were critical of the institutions which have been created to do the work in the Project and the National Extension areas. Shri K. S. Raghavachari called them "unsuited to the real needs of the situation". He added : "The institutions that should have been taken hold of for this purpose are the Village Panchayats. They are democratic institutions with some autonomy, and they are also intimately connected with the people on the spot." It was an interesting debate and it would appear that the members of the Lok Sabha were not generally satisfied with the manner in which the village bodies were associated with the Community Projects in matters of policy formulations and decisions. Apparently, however, a change has been effected in policy direction in this matter from the top Planning Commission level. Speaking on Shri Raghubir Sahay's motion, Union Deputy Minister for Planning, Shri S. N. Mishra, referring to Project Advisory Committees, said : "In the initial stages it was not considered ripe that Panchayats and co-operatives should elect their representatives on these committees. Therefore, the Collectors were authorised to nominate persons on these committees. Now we are inclined to believe that the time has come to introduce an elective element in these committees. So we have suggested to the State Governments that the Panchayats should be asked to send their representatives to these committees, and wherever the Panchayats do not exist, *ad hoc* bodies like *Vikas Mandals* should be asked to send their representatives."

Panchayats And Projects: The Future Perspective

Shri Mishra's statement is to be welcomed. Our regret is that this association was not considered to be conducive even earlier. The present is a stage of early beginnings, in a long view of things, and the experiments that are being made and the improvements which are being effected in Project working following the experience gained may and should continue. It is apparent, however, taking a longer perspective, that the State cannot for all time incur the high administrative costs involved in running a Community Project Administration, with all its paraphernelia, that is being incurred at present. As Panchayats grow and develop and gain in experience, the functions of the Community Projects and N.E.S. will have to be increasingly transferred to them and they bestowed with sufficient powers, and given sufficient aid to discharge their responsibilities. Community Projects are essentially for rousing the community spirit for development. The beginnings have been excellent and the achievements encouraging. This had to be so in view of the pathetic contentment of the people with their conditions and the crust of stagnation in village life. This apathy has broken, the crust has been removed and the sap has begun to flow. In subsequent and higher stages the progress would be on a higher plane, and then the Village Panchayats will have to be made supreme and the Government officials will have to function as servants of the elected representatives of the people.

Panchayats And Planning

The question of National Planning in relation to Panchayats has also to be viewed from an identical angle, namely, that Panchayats alone are the best medium for implementation of any schemes in the villages, and prior consultation with them, before the final Plan is drawn, enthuses them and later helps in its effective implementation. In a speech delivered at the A.I.C.C. Secretariat in July 1953, Nehru said[1]: "I know the psychology of the Indian people. They want to see that you are learning from them and their advice and opinions are valued. This means that we must move away from the existing tendency to give instructions to all and sundry. They have to be clearly told that the Delhi Treasury will not give them all cash, that Delhi Treasury is not a bottomless pit. And if we do our work properly our masses are bound to realise that they are partners in some very vital activities. One method is to gather them for some work. Another is to combine discussions of the schemes and plans with work."

On another occasion, addressing a Conference of P.C.C. Presidents and Chief Ministers at the A.I.C.C. Secretariat on September 2, 1955, Nehru repeated the same ideas in the following words:[2] "I have always believed and believe even more so today, that our people are eminently sensible. They appreciate difficulties, if we take them into confidence and place all the facts before them. The greatest mistake is to treat people as incapable of understanding our problems. The problems in their broad implications must be placed before them. They very much like the idea of yourself going to them and explaining to them all the pros and cons of the situation. We are well aware of the psychology of the child. He is happy when his parents treat him as one who understands things." And Nehru added: "After all, democracy is much more than occasional selection of Government, etc. It means, in practice, being, near the people. Democracy goes wrong when this is not done."

The question of Panchayats and Planning has been widely discussed. Attention was first focussed on the need to plan from the bottom in an article in the *A.I.C.C. Economic Review* as early as November 1, 1953, by Congress General Secretary Shriman Narayan, entitled "Planning from the Bottom." Soon after, the Planning Commission addressed a circular[3] to State Governments, the objects being "to convey suggestions on an important aspect of the Second Five-Year Plan, viz., the manner in which, within the district, the work of planning may be organised and plans prepared for individual villages and groups of villages such as tehsils, talukas, National Extension Development Blocks, etc. It is essential that local initiative in formulating plans and local effort and resources in carrying them out should be stimulated to the maximum extent possible. This will help to relate the plans closely to local needs and conditions and also to secure public co-operation and voluntary effort and contribution."

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[1] See A.I.C.C. Economic Review, Vol. V, No. 7, Whole No. 80 of August 1, 1953; quotation on cover.

[2] A.I.C.C. Economic Review, Second Five-Year Plan Special Number, Vol. VII, Nos. 10-11. Whole No. 131-132, dated September 23, 1955.

[3] The text of this circular is published in A.I.C.C. Economic Review, Vol. VI, No. 2. Whole No. 99, of May 15, 1934.

The circular later said : "Village planning will be primarily concerned with agricultural production and activities ancillary thereto, including co-operation. Planning should, therefore, aim in the first place at determining for each village or group of villages what steps can be taken over the period of the Second Plan to increase agricultural production and the volume of rural employment. Specific items to be considered are :

1. Use and production of improved seeds;
2. Use of manures and fertilisers;
3. Consolidation of holdings;
4. Village irrigation works;
5. Reclamation of waste land;
6. Contour bunding and soil conservation;
7. Introduction of new crops (including vegetables and fruit growing), and improved implements and methods of cultivations;
8. Improved cattle, including dairying;
9. Development of subsidiary occupations, e.g., poultry, bee-keeping, piggeries, etc.;
10. Planting trees;
11. Khadi;
12. Village industries, especially for supplying the needs of the rural market;
13. Formation of multi-purpose co-operatives and strengthening of existing co-operative societies;
14. Improvement of village communications and other local works programmes.

"Throughout the human aspect should be emphasised so that every family is assisted in its efforts to improve its conditions.

"In respect of schemes of agricultural improvement, which it is proposed to include in the village plans, it would be necessary to specify (1) the contributions which the villagers themselves could make in the way of money, labour or supplies, and (2) the help which would be required of Government in the matter of technical advice, supplies and finance. Some estimate should also be made for the increase in production of the main crops and in employment as a result of the plans which are adopted.

"In the field of agricultural production and local works, village planning is likely to be more definite than in other fields such as health, education, etc. It is necessary that these needs should also receive due attention as part of the programme of social services which the State envisages for the Plan period. In regard to these, local contributions should be obtained on a reasonable basis."

This important circular of the Planning Commission set in a process in the country in which villages enthusiastically estimated their requirements and submitted it to the District Planning Authorities, who, after integrating the various village-schemes in an over-all District Plan submitted it to the State Planning Authorities for integration in the State Plan. Fears were expressed that villages, when asked to state their requirements, would naturally pitch it high, and when at a later stage they will find that all their demands have not been met, there would be disappointment and frustration. Such an evaluation, based on a wrong estimation of our people, contrary to what Nehru has said, later proved wrong. The very fact that the villages were consulted was in itself a great thing, and even partial acceptance of their demands satisfied them. Indeed, as has been variously suggested, the phenomenon of the village at the bottom participating in the formulation of the National Plan of India has been one of the healthiest aspect of Planning in India.

The *Report of the Congress Village Panchayat Committee* has discussed the question of Panchayats and Planning in details. It has warned against setting up a number of bodies in the village and has suggested that the Development Council visualised for the village should be "woven around the Village Panchayats". This suggestion is of the utmost importance. We must avoid the multiplicity of too many bodies in the village. They will only lead to wastage and friction. They will further open the field for undue interference in village affairs by officials, which is today a real danger, and has to be constantly watched and guarded against. In all matters relating to villages, the Panchayats must be regarded as supreme. That should be the keynote of our Planning as related to villages.

CHAPTER XXXIX

TRAINING OF PANCHAYAT CADRE

> *"There is an intensive effort at development of our villages.... How can we afford to cut ourselves away from it and yet expect to seed it with the seeds of psychological revolution that we intend to work out. It is a community at work, whether it is local projects, health or sanitation. We can make a difference by investing them with an outlook that can endure beyond the actual effort..... No police force can for all time control a people, unless they themselves develop internal controls. No peaceful progress is possible unless there is a body of public servants who can influence them whatever the magnitude of the crisis."* [1]
>
> —*U. N. DHEBAR*

IT is obvious that the Village Panchayats in India will be able to fulfil the tasks before them and help the evolution of our society to a socialist system only when they function in a proper and disciplined manner with deep consciousness of their responsibilities. This is possible only when all those responsible for Panchayat functioning are equipped for the task through adequate training.

The Growth-Pattern Of The National Movement

This, of necessity, entails conscious direction from the top. This task, essentially one of reconstruction of our society, would be different from the "spontaniety pattern" of our pre-Independence struggle. This "spontaniety pattern" may be thus defined. As distinct from conscious direction from the top and building up the organisational structure brick by brick from below, the movement grew up in the form of bursting up of pent-up feelings of the masses, instances like the Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 1919, or the arrest of Gandhiji and the Congress leadership in 1942 acting as the igniting factors. Further, as distinct from a set and clear-cut ideas on social history and development, the movement comprised people with widely divergent ideas on social and economic policies, though the dominant anti-imperialist aspect of the struggle successfully united all the differing groups and individuals who comprised the movement.

Of course, from 1885 to 1919, the Congress was gradually evolving as an organisation increasingly becoming more and more representative of the Indian people, but it became the powerful instrument it did only when the overtowering personality of Gandhiji became supreme in the organisation after World War One. Shri U. N. Dhebar has said[1]: "Bapu with his uncanny powers of observation and synthesis could at crucial moments touch upon these vital chords, and most of us used to be surprised at the mass enthusiasm and forces that were set in motion." The national movement, nevertheless, represented structurally in the Congress organisation, remained largely a spontaneous formation, bringing together people from differing walks of life, which seldom undertook day to day work among the people, say, the organisation of peasants or the working classes. But on specific occasions there used to be a burst of activities with millions participating in them. It is also true that anti-imperialism and vague nationalism united people under the Congress banner, though the various groups under them held widely divergent views in matters of future or immediate economic policies and allied matters.

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[1] From Presidential Address to Sixty-first Session of the Indian National Congress, Amritsar, February 1956.

The best evaluation of this stage of the national movement is to be found in the writings of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, in his *Autobiography*, then in a series of collected essays written in the period 1934-1940[2], and later in his *Discovery of India*. And of special significance would be his historic essay *Whither India* published in 1934, which gave concrete ideas to the vague nationalism of the Congress and, in fact, gave it a socialist bias. Indeed, it would not be wrong to say that the seed sown by Pandit Nehru in 1934 by his *Whither India* found full fruition in 1955 at Avadi.

That the task of bringing about a socialist pattern of society has been accepted by a national movement which, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, chose the path of non-violence for the attainment of its objective of Independence, is of special significance. As though ordained by history and destined by its ancient genius and greatness, India seeks to bring about a peaceful transition to an equalitarian socialist society in which the Panchayats are destined to play a vital role.

Dangers Of Vague And Amorphous Approach

In order that the Panchayats may become effective instruments to fulfil their role, it is of the utmost importance that there should be perfect ideological compactness among those who run it and complete clarity about the ends and means. Congress President, Shri U. N. Dhebar, in his address to the Amritsar Congress, in another context, expressed this thought in the following ringing words: "While we may not think in terms of a regimented approach, we can not permit a vague and an amorphous approach also. The roots of the decay of a party, as of a country, lie in the thought structure of its membership. *The fog surrounding the mind of a community may well conceal the valley of its self-destruction.*"

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[1] See **A.I.C.C. Economic Review**, Vol. VII, No. 1, Whole No. 122, dated May 1, 1955, article entitled "New Social Order."

[2] We have before us the following compilations of Nehru's writings during this period : (1) **Recent Essays and Writings**, Kitabistan, Allahabad, 1937; (2) **Eighteen Months in India**, 1936-37, Kitabistan, Allahabad, 1938; (3) **Where Are We?** Kitabistan, Allahabad, 1939; (4) **The Unity of India, Collected Writings 1937-1940**, Lindsay Drummond, London, 1941, (foreword by V. K. Krishna Menon).

Unity On The Basis Of Set Ideology And Philosophy

It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that the Panchayat ranks be united by a set ideology and philosophy. Of course, when we say this, we do not think in terms of regimented ideas and philosophies. Nevertheless, a minimum common understanding is of the utmost significance in order that we may march forward as a disciplined nation for the achievement of our objective and the fulfilment of our destiny. It would then be necessary to make this thinking the property of every active Panchayat worker, and to ensure that all office-bearers in the Panchayats are trained in and made well aware of this basic minimum. To quote Shri U. N. Dhebar again, in another context he said[1]: "For the achievement of this unity of ideas, it is essential that there should be a common understanding about our evolution to the present phase of development."

Outlines Of A Study Syllabus

The question of a syllabus, therefore, for the training of Panchayat workers assumes profound importance. We have further to bear in mind that the Panchayat worker, the Panches, Sarpanches, the Assistant Panchayat Officers, etc., are not very educated people, and their training will have to be in a simple digestible manner. Further, the higher grades of officials also have to be trained into the ideology. The levels of training classes apart, we feel that the following minimum understanding must be made the property of all persons who have anything to do with Panchayats :

(1) An interpretation of Indian history from the ancient times; the distinctive features of Indian history, tolerance and spiritualism; emphasis on decentralised local government like Village Panchayat; emphasis on *Tyaga* and the people's good; absence of Western type of development in Indian history, etc.

(2) India as the house absorbing all cultures; the fundamental unity of India; unity in diversity; the cultural synthesis.

(3) The impact of British Rule over India; why India went

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[1] A.I.C.C. Economic Review, Vol. VIII, No. 2, Whole No. 147, dated May 15, 1956. See Report of Meeting of Congress Literature Sub-Committee, p. 31.

down; the process of the great destruction of Panchayats; reasons of the destruction.

(4) The 1857 Mutiny and the birth of the National Movement; the development of the National Movement.

(5) India's economy under the British : the pauperisation of the peasantry; growth of industries; rise of the working class; the 1921 movement; 1931 movement.

(6) Gandhian principles—emphasis on decentralisation and cottage industries.

(7) The world in 1936; the rise of Hitler; the anti-Fascist movement; Nehru's lead at Lucknow Congress; India in 1936-39.

(8) World War II; the August 1942 Resolution; implications of the August Revolution.

(9) After World War II : the Partition; Congress economic policy after Independence.

(10) A brief history of growth of socialist ideas in the world —the Russian Revolution—the Chinese Revolution.

(11) A history of the development of socialist ideas in India's National Movement; the culmination at Avadi; clarification of the socialist pattern; India's distinctive feature.

In fact, this list can be made much more concrete and detailed and fully elaborated. We seek to suggest the barest minimum. And in so doing we are conscious that this plan may be viewed by some as much too ambitious and impracticable. We, however, do not feel so. The point is to make this thinking common. At different levels, the education will have to be made simple and adapted to the level of understanding of those who are sought to to be trained. This certainly is not a difficult task.

Technical And Legal Aspects Of Training

Besides these, the technical and legal aspects of Panchayats will have to be explained to the Panchayat workers. This will differ from State to State, in accordance with the State Panchayat Acts. The Nyaya Panches have specially to be imparted training in the judicial aspect. We have referred to the training syllabus for Panchayats in the State of Jammu and Kashmir (ante p. 656).

Training By The Union Centre And The States

The task of undertaking this training may be broken up in two stages. In the first stage, in the interests of all India uniformity, a series of central schools may be run by the Central Government. At present it is the Union Health Ministry which looks after Panchayat work in so far as the Union Centre is connected with it.

We suggest that this job of training should be made the responsibility of the Planning Commission. This Central Training should be intensive and should comprise the higher Panchayat Officials in the State as also the best among the district Panchayat officials and Sarpanches. Later, at the State level, training should be imparted in State Panchayat Acts, other aspects, the judicial functions, etc.

CHAPTER XL

PANCHAYAT ELECTIONS: THE PRINCIPLE OF UNANIMITY

> *"While elections are essential for assessing the wishes of the people, the important thing is how to ascertain the wishes of the people and not the particular method. I would, therefore, plead for an original approach to this question of ascertaining the wishes of the people. If we emphasise the maintenance of unity in the village, we can still find in every village a few individuals in whom the village community is prepared to repose its confidence. What is needed is a personnel which understand the minds of the people in the village and the prevailing currents and not merely satisfy the mechanical mathematics of election laws."*[1]
>
> *—U. N. DHEBAR*

ADDRESSING a Panch Sammelan at Village Padila in his constituency in Allahabad district on April 6, 1956, Shri Nehru said :[2] "We want no casteism here. We do not want liars and cheats. We want honest and responsible people in this country. We have to build up India and that can be done when people are honest." Speaking to the Panches pointedly, he said that people should elect able persons to Panchayats, but he did not mind if very able persons were not elected so long as they were honest and truthful.

Nehru Warns Against Grouping In Panchayats

Again, inaugurating the Bihar Panchayat Parishad Conference at Jamui in Muzaffarpur district on April 22, 1956, Shri Nehru said :[3] "Panchayats have to lend a big hand in the uplift of villages through co-operative effort. If the people frittered away their energies by fighting among themselves and running Panchayats on caste or group lines, they would weaken the foundation of the country.......If Panchayats indulged in casteism, they would become worthless and it would be better to do away with them altogether."

In an earlier chapter we have referred to conflicts in villages which are made complex by the coincidence of caste and property differences. In fact, there undoubtedly exist in the villages factors contributing towards disunity, just as there are certain compelling urges for village unity. What is necessary is to take a balanced view of things, encourage village unity and take energetic and effective steps to end factors for disunity.

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[1] See Introduction.
[2] National Herald, 7.4.'56.
[3] Hindustan Times, 23.4.'56.

" Election On Party Basis Worst Service To Villages "—Dhebar

In this context, it should be noted that the system of elections to the Village Panchayats, modelled on the Western pattern, have the effect of encouraging casteism and encourage factions and disunity. Shri Dhebar has correctly remarked : "Our fancy for the British model of elections is costing us heavily." Acharya Vinoba Bhave also, in a number of his post-prayer speeches, has expressed his clear opinion against the introduction of the ballot method of election in the villages, which brings in its trail all the evil practices associated with party battles. As Shri Dhebar very rightly points out, the important thing is to ascertain the wishes of the people and not the particular method. He says : "The vote should not be allowed to divide the people. Political parties with their rigid mental inhibitions cannot operate without bypassing this basic need for social integration in the background and injuring the process of community existence, at any rate in the present state of things." And he adds: "I would, therefore, unhesitatingly say that elections on party basis would be the worst service that we can render to the people of the villages. I would go to the extent of asking for a constitutional prohibition of such elections."

Panchayats And Politics At Simla Local Self-Government Ministers Conference

This question came up for a lengthy discussion at the Conference of Local Self-Government Ministers at Simla in June 1954. It was an interesting discussion and we would like to report it in detail.[1] When the question of Village Panchayats and role of political parties was taken up, Shri Shriman Narayan, the Congress General Secretary and special invitee to the Conference, said that the Panchayat should be looked at as a non-political unit. If the Village Panchayats are to serve the purpose for which they are meant, then political parties should not introduce their politics in them. The functions of the Village Panchayats should be mainly confined to social, economic and cultural questions. He pointed out that two of the major political parties in the country, namely, the Congress and the Praja Socialist Party, have already indicated that they will not participate in Panchayat elections as political parties. He said that this is a very good augury for the future and we must further ensure that Panchayats be kept aloof from party politics. Shri Narayan said that if we lose sight of this basic fact then we will not be able to re-build our villages and the idea of *Panch Parameshwar* will not triumph. We have to take care that in our enthusiasm for providing a democratic set-up in the villages we should not introduce the Western type of elections and their evils in our countryside.

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[1] See A.I.C.C. Economic Review, Vol. VI, No. 5, Whole No. 102, dated July 1, 1954.

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur said that she would completely endorse this view. We must have our best men and women in the village body. She pointed out that in Britain they have already built up a tradition so that in the elections to the local bodies the best men are selected, irrespective of their party affiliations. It is true that we cannot impose our views on the different political parties of the country. But she had the fullest confidence that a considered pronouncement to this effect by this representative Conference would create the necessary atmosphere for the growth of Village Panchayats on non-partisan lines.

U.P.'s L.S.G. Minister, Shri Mohanlal Gautam, said that there was profound meaning in what Shri Narayan had said and his pronouncement itself as the General Secretary of the Indian National Congress binds the biggest political party of the country to such a policy towards Village Panchayats. But he was not very clear whether it would be proper to say this thing at the Conference.

Shri V. V. Dravid, a Minister of Madhya Bharat, and Shri I. D. Jalan, L.S.G., Minister from West Bengal, agreed that the elections to the Panchayats should be on a non-party basis. But they doubted whether the L.S.G. Ministers Conference could place any such conditions on political parties. At best it could only recommend. A Deputy Minister from PEPSU said that in his State they wanted to act on these very lines but the Communists took full advantage of the non-participation of the other political parties and took part in the Panchayat elections on their party slogans.

Shri Bhimsen Sachar, then Chief Minister of Punjab, completely agreed with Shri Narayan's views. He said that wherever we have enough influence we should see that Panchayats should not become party affairs. He pointed out that in Punjab they had about 10,000 Panchayats and the Congress had decided that there should be no party propaganda in the Panchayat elections, and he was happy to inform the Conference that the elections passed off very smoothly. The quality of Panches they have got elected can compare very favourably with any standard that may be laid down. It is necessary that political influence does not come in the elections. He said that his conception of a Panchayat is that of a family. In Punjab they have Panchayat in every village of 500 souls and if a village population is less than this, then they combine one or more villages. The success of Village Panchayat administration will depend on the enthusiasm we arouse and the feeling of oneness we put in them. If we have political manoeuvrings, then this will not be possible. Political parties are based on differences, and in the village sphere we must do our best to remove these differences.

Shri R. M. Adani, Development Minister of Saurashtra, said that the Conference cannot decide about political parties. He suggested that we may first decide how we shall elect the Panchayats and then the question of political parties will answer itself. Even apart from all-India parties, local parties are formed. We should decide upon the question of unanimity in election. In Saurashtra they have experimented like that. They did not get complete unanimity but achieved a large measure of agreement.

Shri Bhola Paswan, L.S.G. Minister from Bihar, said that the experience of Panchayats in Bihar has shown that they have generated new enthusiasm and new spirit in the countryside. In Bihar they attempted to have unanimous elections to the Panchayats and to a large extent succeeded. He thought that if they insist upon keeping politics completely away from the Village Panchayats, it may not be feasible. Still for the elections to the Village Panchayats the unanimity principle can be tried. How can Panchayat be kept away from politics if we go to the same village for elections to the State Assembly and the Parliament? He felt that this question could not be discussed in the Conference. Inspite of this their experience in Bihar with regard to the formation of Panchayats has been very satisfactory.

Sri Ram Karan Joshi of Rajasthan pointed out that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in a recent pronouncement had suggested that we should have Panchayats of two types, namely, those elected unanimously, to whom we should give more powers, and those elected by majority votes, who should be given lesser powers. After some speeches by the representatives from Ajmer, Madhya Bharat, Andhra, etc., the Chairman of the Panchayat Committee of the Conference, Shri Mohanlal Gautam, summarised the whole discussion. He said that unanimity in elections is very desirable but is undoubtedly difficult to achieve. They could only recommend. They can not prevail upon a political party to adopt a specific course.

Congress Village Panchayat Committee On The Need For Unanimity

The Congress Village Panchayat Committee also gave serious thought to the question of keeping the Panchayats away from party politics. The Committee emphasised that one of the reasons for the success of Panchayats in ancient India was the principle of unanimity in the constitution of Panchayats. "Elders of the village from different communities were elected by the whole village meeting almost unanimously. Whenever it was not possible to achieve unanimity, election was completed by means of lots drawn by the youngest child in the village." And the Committee said that it "attaches the greatest significance to the need of unanimity in the working of Village Panchayats. The Committee feels that Panchayats elected unanimously should have more powers vested in them, than those where unanimity could not be achieved in the process of their formation."

The Saurashtra Alternative

The question is undoubtedly ticklish. How can political parties be persuaded to keep the party label away from Panchayat elections? The fact that the Congress and the Praja Socialist Party agreed to such a course is undoubtedly a big advance, but then what about the other parties? As a PEPSU spokesman said at the Simla Conference, when Congress kept out, the Communists took full advantage of it. We feel, however, that an earnest attempt should nevertheless be made to have an agreement on the question, and probably it may not be difficult of achievement.

Harmony In Panchayats The Greatest Need

In the alternative, the best course is the one adopted in Saurashtra, which has also been strongly recommended by the Congress Village Panchayat Committee. Panchayats which are elected unanimously should be given greater powers than those where elections have not been unanimous. Such a course will generate the urge for unanimous elections among the village populace.

Emphasis on unanimity is essential in order that the Panchayat may be able to do its best for village uplift. An unanimously elected Panchayat will draw all round support of the village and will achieve greater success than another rent by disputes which linger on following electioneering. In fact, the Western type of electioneering carries with it the seeds of destroying all chances of integration. The main point is to evolve a method by which we may ascertain the minds of the people without risking the principle of harmony.

CHAPTER XLI

PANCHAYATS: THE JUDICIAL ASPECT

DICK: "The first thing we do, let us kill all the lawyers".
JACK CADE: "Nay, that I mean to do."

—SHAKESPEARE
(Henry IV)

"Not a profession but a conspiracy."

—BERNARD SHAW

"Sir, I do not care to speak ill of any man behind his back, but I believe the gentleman is an attorney"

—DR. JOHNSON

"Moghal justice had a silver lining; it had no lawyers."

—DR. BENI PRASAD
(Jehangir)

SPEAKING at Karukallur, in Chingleput district of Madras, on June 27, 1956, Acharya Vinoba Bhave criticised courts of justice. He said that judgements of these courts, based only on recorded evidence, tended to engender more hatred and animosity among people. Acharya Bhave was delivering his usual post-prayer speech. He is further reported to have said that man does not commit himself on paper and create evidence for his doings. But judgements delivered are based upon such evidence. He said that love and affection towards fellow beings would solve many a dispute.[1]

Courts In British Days—Veritable Engines Of Oppression

Indeed, one of the most pitiable sights to be seen in pre-Independence India was the spectacle of hungry, tired-looking peasants sitting in groups outside District Courts, waiting for their names to be called and returning disappointed, not once or twice, but for months together. Actually this 'Court-technique' became one of the most potent weapons in the hands of the landlords of yore to break even the most sturdy and militant tenant. The *modus operandi* was as follows. A fictitious suit would be filed and a date fixed. Trudging all the way from his village, which distance could be 20, 30 and even 50 and 60 miles, the haggard tenant would reach the court on the fixed day. By this time, however, by paying a rupee or two as illegal gratification to the mighty *Peshkar,* the landlord would get the date postponed, and would take good care to see that the new dates are fixed in the busiest agricultural seasons. At great risk to his cultivation, the poor tenant will again trudge to the court to be told again of the postponement, and to trudge back again. The strongest and the sturdiest fellow was thus broken. Indeed, the court became a veritable collaborator of the landowning classes. Reeking with corruption—an honest man in a lower court during British times could well be a museum piece in that world of dishonesty and deceit—and manned by a most unsympathetic and heartless army of subordinate judicial officers, the courts became a terror for the peasantry. Very naturally, a village wit once thus explained the meaning of the *Adalat* (court) to the author : *'A'*, he said, means *Aao* (come), *'da'*, he said, means *Deo* (give), *'la'* means *lara denge* (will make you quarrel) and *'t'*, he explained, means *ghar men tava na rah jayega* (even the pan for cooking bread will not be left in the household).

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[1] **Hindusthan Standard Evening News** (New Delhi edition), 30.6.'56.

Indeed, among the depredations caused by the British, the destruction of the village system of decision over disputes, and the consequent imposition of British legal forms and courts, would have a pride of place. Later, even in late nineteenth century, and beginning of the twentieth century, the British attempted some kind of revival of village courts, but the efforts were doomed to failure.

Gandhiji Sees The Potentiality Of Reviving Village Justice

It was Gandhiji who first saw the great potentiality of reviving the system of village justice and at the time of the Non-Co-operation Movement, in 1920-21, when he advocated boycott of law courts, he made the setting up of Panchayats in villages for settling village disputes a fighting militant slogan. We have referred to this aspect in Book I (Chapter VIII). Under Congress direction, earnest attempts were made to set up what came to be called 'Arbitration Courts' in different provinces. They achieved varying degree of success in different places, and but for the arrests of Congressmen, who were organising these courts, and the general policy of oppression of the British rulers, this experiment would have achieved phenomenal success.

Punjab Provincial Congress Committee's Scheme For Arbitration Courts In 1922

During the last few years, with the revival of judicial functions of Panchayats, a lot has been said for or against them. The discussions have also centred round how the Adalat or Nyaya Panchayats should be constituted, etc. During those hectic days of 1920-22, the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee drafted a most comprehensive scheme and rules for Arbitration Courts, and as we perused it, we were struck by its sheer common sense and innate honesty. This draft of the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee was published in *Young India* of August 3, 1922, and we reproduce it below in full with the confidence that they would be found immensely useful for our Nyaya Panchayat functioning today as well.

The Punjab Provincial Congress Committee's scheme and rules for Arbitration Courts are as under :

(1) The policy of the Congress is to put an end to the evil of litigation and for this purpose the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee shall form a board called the Panchayat Board for the purpose of organising Panchayats in every village and town of the province, frame rules for them and from time to time take such measures as may be necessary to overcome all difficulties and strengthen the organisation.

(2) The Board shall be in charge of a member of the Working Committee of the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee and may include practising lawyers if necessary.

(3) The aim of the Board shall be to make the Panchayat self-supporting as far as possible but the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee shall ailot a separate budget for carrying on propaganda in this department and for initial and emergency expenses of the same.

(4) All Panchayats formed under the aegis of any Congress organisation whatever, shall be subordinate to this Board, shall carry out the rules framed and instructions given from time to time and shall refer all difficult questions to this Board for advice and guidance through their respective District Congress Committees.

(5) Every District Congress Committee shall depute certain of its members, whether full non-co-operators or not, to be in charge of the Panchayats in that district and the Board shall be known as the District Panchayat Board.

(6) This body shall exercise the same control and supervision over the Panchayats of the district, subject to the rules framed and instructions given by the Provincial Board and shall act strictiy under the control of the latter.

(7) Every District Congress Committee may, if it thinks necessary, organise boards in every tehsil. These Tehsil Boards shall be as far as possible on the same model as the District Board and shall exercise control and jurisdiction within the tehsil.

(8) The District Congress Committee shall immediately proceed to form Panchayats in each village or town in the district and shall for this purpose send out *Pracharaks* to help in organising the same.

(9) The aim should be as far as possible to have a Panchayat in every place where there is a Congress Committee established.

Construction Of Panchayats

(1) In every village or town the people of the locality should be assembled together and be asked to select a certain number among themselves varying from 15 to 25 to form a panel of Panchayat.

(2) The men selected should, as far as possible, be men of integrity and character possessing the confidence of the people or a well-defined section of the people of the locality.

(3) Care should be taken that all castes and creeds be represented and if any are left out, the Executive of the local Congress Committee should proceed to nominate a number necessary to make up the deficiency and in no case exceeding five in number. Out of this panel five men should be selected in the manner given below to decide any case that may come up for decision to the Panchayat and these five shall constitute the Panchayat for the particular case. The decision of the Panchayat will be final and binding on the parties of the case.

Reference To Panchayats

A person or persons having a dispute with any other person or persons in the village, town or tehsil, either civil or criminal or of a cognizable nature, may, by petition in writing, apply to the local Congress Committee giving the nature of the dispute, full name and address of the parties and expressing a desire to have the case decided by a Panchayat.

On receipt of such a petition in writing as aforesaid, the Executive of the local Congress Committee or any one or more persons deputed on its behalf shall approach the other party or parties and induce them by peaceful persuasion to agree to the case being taken up by the Panchayat.

On an agreement having been struck between the parties to refer the matter to the Panchayat, the Executive of the local Congress Committee or any person or persons appointed on their behalf shall get a form signed by the parties saying that they refer the matter voluntarily and without any compulsion to the decision of the Panchayat and that they would on their honour carry out the decision to the letter and would not have any further recourse to courts.

On the completion of these formalities such party or parties will be asked to choose two arbitrators each from the panel already mentioned above; the fifth shall be appointed by the Executive of the Congress Committee and shall preside over the meeting of the Panchayat for that case.

As far as possible the president should be a man well known for his impartiality and if any communal difference arises between the parties, shall be a man of a community different from that of the parties, e.g., if the parties are Hindu and Mohammedan, the president shall be as far as possible either a Sikh, a Christian or a Parsi.

This rule, however, need not be followed in caste questions, where the president should be a person fully acquainted with the manner and customs of a particular caste.

Procedure

When the Panchayat is thus formed, the president shall fix dates for hearing and call upon the parties to come with their witnesses. The dates may be continuous or otherwise.

Ordinarily the complainant will be allowed to prove his case first and then the defendant. The rules of the law of evidence shall generally not apply but no irrelevant or scandalous evidence or an evidence immaterial to the case will be allowed.

The Panchayat need not keep a record of all the evidence but should take only such notes as may be necessary for refreshing their memory.

The sittings shall as far as possible be continuous and efforts should be made to finish the case in the shortest time possible.

Ordinarily parties should not be allowed to appear with advocates or lay-representatives except in the case of women and minors. But where intricate cases of law or customs are involved, the Panchayat may for its own guidance refer the points involved to the District Board who will arrange to get expert legal opinion and forward it to the Panchayat. The Board to which it is referred shall proceed to get the opinion and forward it with all expedition. In such cases the parties may apply before the Board to which the matter is referred, to have the matter argued out by a counsel of their own choice and at their own expense. When this is done the Board shall depute some of its own members to hear the arguments and decide the points of law or custom involved. This decision shall be final.

When the whole case has been prosecuted before the Panchayat and in cases where parties had been referred for opinion to any

Panchayat Board, when the opinion is received by the Panchayat, the Panchayat shall proceed to form a decision and put it down in writing. No arguments need be given.

This decision shall be pronounced to the parties in their presence and the date fixed for the carrying out of the terms of the decision.

The proceedings of the Panchayat shall as far as possible be public.

Expenses

The Panchayat may, in cases where some expenditure may have to be incurred, call on the parties to deposit the necessary amount in such proportion as they may think just and equitable. In no case shall the amount so deposited exceed the actual expenses. If any balance is left, it shall be refunded to the parties.

Execution

The local Congress Committee shall take steps to get the decree executed within the time fixed by the Panchayat in its decisions or within a reasonable time if no time is fixed. This should be done by persuasion and moral pressure. In no case shall any sort of compulsion involving force be used.

Social boycott should be avoided as far as possible, but specially that causing incenvenience or trouble in the every-day life, e.g., social relations may be cut off, participations in marriages and other ceremonial occasions may be given up, but such methods as preventing the persons from drawing water or having provision for every day use or using the public roads should be strictly refrained from.

In cases involving money disputes, the best way to proceed will be to ask the parties to deposit, before the case is heard at all, such sum as each party becomes liable for, if the case were to be decided against it on the express understanding that when a decision is given, only the net money as may remain will be refunded to the party after the terms of the decision are carried out and the amount due to the opposite party is paid.

The deposit may be by one party or both, according as there are cross-claims or not.

Punishment

In cases of a criminal nature which are non-cognizable, if punishments are to be awarded in the shape of fines or otherwise, they should invariably be light and must be conceived in the light of a token of repentance and not as carrying out a policy of revenge or to act as deterrence by themselves.

The greatest deterrence should be public opinion and nothing more. If the culprit refuses to undergo the punishment, no physical force should be used. Social pressure with limitations as mentioned above may be brought to work to ensure compliance.

The best form of punishment will be a fine to compensate the complainant or contributions to some charitable institution.

Every Committee shall keep a register of applications, names of parties, nature of the disputes, names of the Panches, particulars of the decisions, dates of announcement of the decisions and execution. All forms of agreement taken should be kept in original, numbered and arranged.

Miscellaneous

In settling disputes, Panchayats are recommended to effect a compromise freely and fully assented to by the parties, as this alone will save any possibility of further dispute and avoid the troubles incidental to the execution of decisions formally given. Such compromise should as far as possible be in writing and signed by both the parties, in triplicate, one copy for the Congress Committee and one for each party.

Every case referred to any Panchayat shall have to be decided within 6 months from the date of the agreement by the parties to refer the case to the Panchayats; after which the parties may refuse to be bound up by their original agreement of reference. This refusal shall be communicated in writing to the Congress Committee.

The Amazing Village Courts Of Bali Island: Lawyers Became Jobless

A glimpse into how our village bodies must have functioned in ancient times on the judicial plane is provided by the manner in which the Panchayats are functioning even today in the Hindu island of Bali. This came to our notice in a striking Radio talk from Delhi by Kumari Raj Chowla towards the end of 1955 entitled "The Balinese Way of Life.' Says Raj Chowla [1]: "A Council of Elders, called the Panchayat, controls, regulates and directs the economic and social life of the village and settles all disputes. *As a result*

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[1] This is preceded by the following remarks by Chowla: "To appreciate the Balinese way of life one has to go into the villages. There are few big estates on the island. The farms are held all over the island jointly by village communities. Every village has a large compound wall with a main entrance. There is a second inner wall which runs parallel to the outer one which gives a separate entrance to every family home. Each family lives together and works jointly with other families on the farm. A family home consists of bamboo sheds with thatched or tiled roofs intended for different members of the family. Each family has its own temple with its own deities. In the centre of every village there is a *mandap* intended for the community life of the village."

of this, there have been practically no civil or criminal courts in Bali for centuries. The story is told that after Indonesia became free, three courts were set up. Also two lawyers came to settle on this island. Since then two of the courts have been closed down for lack of work, and the lawyers have found it more profitable to go into business to earn their livelihood. One sign of the general contentment of the people is the fact that theft and burglary are still practically unknown. It is one place in the world where the hotel management insists that guests leave the doors of their rooms open since Balinese employees resist the use of locks."

Nyaya Panchayats Reduce Litigation And Bring Out The Best In Village Folk

If one were to describe in two words the most distressing evils of the administration of justice which call for remedy, the two words will be 'delay' and 'expense.' And decentralisation of the administration of justice is apparently the only remedy for fighting these evils successfully. Further, it is this decentralisation of the administration of justice which alone can end the evil of costly litigation in the villages and bring out the best among our village folk. The Bali example, which needs to be deeply pondered over by the highest judicial officers in India, reveals the idyllic state which obtained in India in olden times. And we submit that the Nyaya Panchayat experiment, which has already achieved great success and reduced litigation and has earned richly deserved tributes, is also bringing out the best in our village life. Look at this example. The people of Athor village in Mehsana district in Gujarat took the decision in January 1956 never to take any dispute to a court of law. The entire population of the village at a meeting called by elderly villagers pledged to follow a four-tier system of Gram Raj for the settlement of any dispute. The system, which is aimed at promoting happy relations among them, includes (1) to avoid raising disputes by trying to understand other people's views, (2) if any dispute arises, it should be taken to the Panch elected at the meeting, (3) if the Panches failed to solve the dispute, help of the village leaders of neighbouring villages will be sought, and (4) if even this combination of arbitrators fails to settle a dispute, the leaders of the nearby town of Unza should be approached and their award will be binding on both parties.[1]

India's Judicial Dignitaries Discuss Nyaya Panchayats

We are, however, aware of the fact that the conferment of judicial powers on Panchayats has been viewed with distrust by some high judicial dignitaries in the country. Thus, for example, Shri

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[1] Hindustan Times Evening News, 20.1 '56.

Patanjali Sastri, when he was Chief Justice of India, said at Gwalior on October 21, 1952, that[1] "it was not possible in the present industrialised society, where law was growing complex day by day, to administer justice through Panchayats as was done in ancient times." Shri Sastri, while discounting a return to the "archaic Panchayat Raj", emphasised the need for simplifying the procedural laws prevalent in the country. Another judicial dignitary on another occasion spoke in no uncertain terms about the evils of Panchayat justice. Addressing the annual conference of the Bengal-Assam Lawyers' Federation at Calcutta on January 6, 1954, Calcutta High Court's Chief Justice, Shri P. B. Chakravarti said[2] : "The establishment of Gram Panchayats and their judicial committees will destroy the admirable judicial traditions set up by the British in India, which, in fact, are mainly responsible for people's faith in the legal system." He added: "If the power that be establish ancient institutions in place of our law courts, the lawyer's profession will end and will be replaced by a class of people about whose character and situation I would rather refrain from saying anything."

There frankly exists deep differences of opinion among the top men of the legal profession in India on the question of Nyaya Panchayats. Thus, for example, Shri S. K. Das, Chief Justice of Patna High Court, has said : [3] "Speaking entirely from the personal point of view, I think that the organisation of these village courts has come to stay and is a move in the right direction." He added : "It should be the attempt of everyone of us to see that the organisation proceeds on healthy and sound lines." Similar sentiments were expressed by Mr. Justice Imam and Mr. Justice Misra of the Patna High Court in a judgement delivered on December 12, 1953. They very correctly remarked : [4] "In all fairness, if the making of the Act is to be satisfactory and confidence established in these Gram Kutcheries, the impression should be brought as widely as possible that justice can be had from such courts and no one should feel that decisions which are given might possibly be due to prejudice or bias."

Distrust Of The People — The Cause Of Condemnation Of Nyaya Panchayats

The reasons for the distrust of some high judicial dignitaries have been explained by them at length. In essence, we may be permitted the observation, they emanate from a distrust of the innate goodness and commonsense of the Indian peasant. This distrust is strengthened by cases of raw justice very often meted out by the Nyaya Panches, and also by instances of gross injustice and unfairness which certainly occur. But that is to a certain extent inevitable in the conditions under which the Nyaya Panchayats have come into existence. With greater experience, economic development and spread of literacy these defects and drawbacks will disappear. What is essential is a sympathetic understanding and kindly guidance.

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[1] **Free Press Journal**, 23.10.'52.

[2] **Panchayat Raj Gazette**, (published from Agra)

[3] **Searchlight**, 14.5.'55.

[4] **Searchlight**, 13.12.'53.

Dr. Katju On Judicial Work Of Panchayats

In this connection, we would take the liberty of quoting Dr. Kailash Nath Katju at length, whose standing as an eminent jurist is recognised by all. In an article entitled 'Panchayats in Uttar Pradesh' published in *National Herald* of August 15, 1955, Dr. Katju says: "So far as I known, these Panchayats are doing excellent work. The judicial Panchayats dispose of lakhs of cases in a year. Under the existing law, it is open to an aggrieved party to apply in revision to civil and criminal courts to set aside the decision of a Panchayat. I have looked into the figures and my heart lept with joy when I found that the first aim of Panchayats is to bring about an amicable settlement between the parties before it. Almost 60 per cent of the cases launched before a Panchayat are compromised. Just decisions are given in those cases which are tried out, and in about 6 per cent only, revisions are filed, and out of these revisions, 33 per cent succeed and 66 per cent are rejected. This is a record of which any judicial tribunal would be immensely proud. These judicial Panchayats confer inestimable benefit on the villages. They have not to run to the headquarters, either of the district or of the tehsil. They have not to spend money on engaging lawyers. It is true that the existing basic structure does not carry out one intention of the framers of the scheme, and that is that every Panchayat should go to the village where the parties reside and where the dispute has arisen. They should sit down in some public place in the village, hear witnesses on the spot and deliver their decision then and there. There should be no adjournments and there should be no going forwards and backwards, and the case should come to an end with the least trouble to the parties. I understand that that is not the existing practice. The Panches have to meet at a central place, many dates are fixed for hearing, and sometimes many adjournments take place. I do hope that, as these Panchayats get well established, and begin to work well, the practice of going to the village itself would become more and more common and would be found beneficial by them.

"The example of U.P., in so far as these Village Panchayats are concerned, has now been copied in practice by all States of

India, and everywhere, it is reported, the scheme has proved a great success. Of course, there are defects, but these defects can be rectified. The general complaint is that practically every village is torn asunder by group politics; there are parties and factions, and the elections to these Panchayats, both administrative and judicial, are affected by partisan spirit, and judicial Panchayats are often swayed by partisan considerations. When I hear of such complaints, I am tempted to think that we must not allow our mind to be prejudiced too much by stray complaints. Take, for example, revisions against the decision of Panchayats which go before judges and the High Court. As I have said above, the number of revisions is about 6,000 out of over three lakhs of cases, and sometimes the High Court judge may make strong stricture aganst the Panches arising out of the proceedings before him in that case. His remarks are published in the newspapers and gain wide publicity. It would be nonsensical to draw any conclusion from such observations in one case. It would be the most lamentable mistake to suppose that all Panches behave in this regrettable fashion. Throughout the world, in every kind of judicial administration, you come across a few cases where the subordinate judicial courts make mistakes, and those mistakes are set right by courts on appeal. But you don't condemn a judicial structure as imperfect, nor the vast majority of judges, simply because one of them goes wrong. Similarly my entreaty is that Panchayats as a whole should not be condemned for the imperfections of a few".

The Stage Of Transition

Indeed, sometimes it is really painful to see the habit of wholesale and general condemnation of Panchayats in certain quarters. The Panchayats are condemned almost with a relish. The attempt, on the other hand, should be to talk to the people in the villages and find out their reactions. We are passing through a stage of transition when the old order is changing and the new pattern is slowly but surely emerging. Village factions born of old conditions still persist but the community life in the villages will improve substantially and will become harmonious. In this, the Nyaya Panchayats will play a significant role.

Pattern Of Nyaya Panchayats

The judicial Panchayats in different States of India, their constitution and powers, etc., have been described by us in Book II. No recapitulation is necessary. It is not necessary to lay down any hard and fast rules for Nyaya Panchayats everywhere. The States should be free to proceed along their own lines. The different experiments will provide a rich fund of experience which can be pooled later and lessons drawn. PEPSU's judicial work, for example, beats a new track.

The Congress Village Panchayat Committee has expressed itself on the question of Nyaya Panchayats.[1] Dr. Katju has emphasised the following points about judicial Panchayats[2]:

(1) Each village assembly formed on the family basis should be asked to elect, representatives, say 5 for each village, to the judicial Panchayats. I favour election because that is the only system by which people will be made to feel that administering justice is their own affair and they are responsible for its purity.

(2) Judicial Panchayat unit should be for 6 villages. There would thus be 30 elected members to the judicial Panchayats.

(3) There should be a Sarpanch elected by these 30 people themselves.

(4) Whenever any case arises in any village, the complaint should be lodged with the Sarpanch. After the preliminary proceedings are over, it should be referred in accordance with the standing orders to a tribunal of five.

(5) In this tribunal every effort should be made by preparing a regional register in such a way that the tribunal should consist of one man each from five villages. Thus there would be four Panches from outside villages and at least one member only from the village where the parties reside.

(6) It should be made compulsory that on the date fixed the five members of the tribunal should go to the village where the parties reside, and in public in the presence of the villagers, hear witnesses and try to finish the case at one hearing. There should be no postponement.

(7) Lawyers should not be permitted.

(8) If any Panch is proved to have misbehaved, the District Magistrate should have power to remove him and direct the vacancy to be filled up by the village assembly concerned.

Gandhiji On Judicial Aspect Of Panchayats

We will conclude this Chapter by quoting a profound observation by Gandhiji on Panchayats and its judicial aspect in 1946. Writing in the *Harijan* of December 8, 1946, Gandhiji said :

"Long ago, how long history does not record, the Indian genius worked out the village and local Panchayat. It remained our forte through many a turbulent period. Kings and dynasties fought and failed, empires rose, ruled, misruled and disappeared, but the villager's life maintained its even tenor, away from the din of battle and the rush of rising and falling empires. He had a village State which protected his life and property and made civilised life possible. Progressively, we must delegate to the Village Panchayat judicial powers in petty criminal and civil cases; the local police too might be put under the charge of the Panchayat. If we build upon this village unit of self-government, rehabilitate it to the altered conditions of today, we shall be working in consonance with the genius of our people. This is the natural and the easy way. Merely to copy the West should not be our object. We may also not forget that the West has made, more specially in the big countries, democracy complex and expensive. West has evolved the official red-tape which makes the democratic machinery cumbrous and slow-moving. All these drawbacks we must try to avoid in the new constitution that we may devise. Our judicial system must be simple and effective. The law's delay and expense and complicacy must be avoided."

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[1] See Chapter XII, pp. 37-40.

[2] A.I.C.C. Economic Review, Vol. VI, No. 5, Whole No. 102, dated July 1, 1954; p. 6.

CHAPTER XLII

PANCHAYAT FINANCES

"We may not be deceived by the wealth we see in the cities of India. It does not come from England or America. It comes from the blood of the poorest. There are said to be 7,00,000 villages in India. Some of them have been simply wiped out. No one has any record of these. Thousands have died of starvation and disease in Bengal, Karnatak and elsewhere. The Government registers can give us no idea of what the village folk are going through. But being a villager myself, I know the conditions in the village. I know the village economics. I tell you that the pressure at the top crushes those at the bottom. All that is necessary is to get off their backs." [1]

"With her magnificent climate, lofty mountains, mighty rivers and an extensive sea-board, India has limitless resources, whose full exploitation in her villages should have prevented poverty and disease. But the divorce of intellect from body labour has made us perhaps the shortest-lived, most resourceless and most exploited nation on earth." [2]

—MAHATMA GANDHI

SPEAKING on the U.P. Panchayat Raj Bill, 1946, in the U.P. Legislative Council on September 15, 1947, Shri Chandra Bhal, later President of this august body, placed to the fore the problem of Panchayat finances in a most telling manner, which makes extremely interesting reading. Said Shri Chandra Bhal: [3] "Calculating, Sir, all the taxes that these Panchayats will be allowed to levy, I find that they will be allowed to levy one anna per rupee on the rents paid. Roughly we may take it that the total rents amount to about 16 crores of rupees, at the rate of one anna per rupee, it amounts to a crore of rupees. The total income of these 50,000 Panchayats will be a crore of rupees. Divided by 50,000, if my arithmetic is not wrong, it comes to about Rs. 200. Let us add every tax, all the possible taxes that they can possibly levy, and by no stretch of imagination can we expect a Village Panchayat to have more than a thousand rupees. Now, with a thousand rupees, they must have an office; a thousand rupees a year, Sir, not a month, i.e., with a thousand rupees a year, they must have an office, they must have a secretary, some clerks; they must have a peon or two; they must have some house, some records; they must have some machinery to collect these taxes.

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[1] From address to Maharashtra Congressmen at Poona, June 29, 1944. Tendulkar's **Mahatma**, Vol. 6, p. 316.

[2] Tendulkar's **Mahatma**, Vol. III, p. 355.

[3] **Proceedings of the Legislative Council of the United Provinces**, Vol. IX, No. 8, Monday, September 15, 1946, pp. 477-479.

"The amount of tax that these Gaon Panchayats could levy, the machinery by which these could be levied and the purpose for which the amount is so levied, would be spent. Now, Sir, considering the duties—not the optional but compulsory duties—construction, repairs, maintenance, cleansing and lighting of public streets, medical relief, sanitation, registering births, deaths and marriages, removal of encroachments, construction and maintenance of public wells, tanks and ponds, construction of new buildings and extension of buildings and so on so forth, maternity and child welfare, bridges, roads, schools, hospitals, etc., all these are to be constructed and maintained in a thousand rupees a year."

Paucity Of Funds For Panchayats

About the general paucity of funds for Village Panchayats, there can hardly be any doubt. In fact, this is a widespread feeling. At the meeting of the Central Council of Local Self-Government Ministers, held at Simla in June 1955, this feeling was voiced almost unanimously. In her opening address, the Union Health Minister, Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur, "referring to the slender finances of local bodies," said : "There is no gainsaying the fact that the main handicap with which our local bodies are afflicted is that of inadequate finance, and I have no hesitation in saying that State Governments must adopt a far more liberal attitude than they have hitherto done in the matter of affording facilities to local bodies for carrying out efficiently their onerous tasks." Shri Ratu Bhai Adani, Development Minister of Saurashtra, pointed out that in this era of planning, villages asked to prepare plans get enthused and present good schemes, "but the disappointment comes when there are no resources to implement those schemes." And he cogently pointed out : "Suggestions have been put forward for imposing taxes. But we have to face realities. Our people are already taxed considerably and there is a limit to taxation." The *Report of the Congress Village Panchayat Committee* has also observed : "The general experience has been that the total income of the Village Panchayat is far from adequate.......The fact is undeniable that our Panchayats suffer from shortage of funds."

Wide Variety Of Panchayat Taxation

This shortage of funds persists despite the wide variety of taxes which the various State Panchayat Acts authorise Panchayats to impose. We have described these in Book II, and they are indeed bewildering. Tabular Representation XIV (pp. 788-789) shows at a glance the various sources of income of Panchayats in India.

Panchayat Revenues Unable To Support Village Social Needs

Despite this variety of revenue sources, Panchayat finances remain in a sorrowful plight. The Taxation Enquiry Commission recommended certain sources of revenue for the Panchayats, but these have not generally satisfied the advocates of local bodies. Shri Chunnilal D. Barfivala, Director of the well-known Local Self-Government Institute of Bombay, for example, has been a vehement critic of these proposals as falling far short of the requirements. And, we believe hardly any source suggested by the Commission remains unexplored by the State Panchayat Acts. If even after these taxes, which sometimes are irksome too, the Panchayats remain poor, it is because the revenue system is unable to support the ever-growing local expenditure on social and cultural needs of the village, which now have to be looked after by the Panchayats as part of their obligatory and discretionary functions.

A Caution Against Misuse Of Taxation Powers By Panchayats

There is another aspect of the matter of taxation by Village Panchayats, which was highlighted by the Congress Village Panchayat Committee. The Committee said in its *Report :* "While not averse to the powers conferred on the Panchayats to impose taxes including the labour tax, we must, however, sound a note of caution against the possible misuse of such powers by the village body. As a matter of fact, in the course of discussion in the Committee it was pointed out that there was a feeling of uneasiness in the villages regarding the imposition of Profession Tax which seemed to impose burden on artisans, handicraftsmen, blacksmiths, carpenters, cobblers, etc., thereby hitting the poorer section of the village rather hard. The Committee felt that the Profession Tax should not appear to be discriminatory."

It should be borne in mind that the Profession Tax is one of the most common taxes imposed in almost all the States. So also is the House Tax. On this also the Congress Village Panchayat Committee had the following to say : "Another point to be borne in mind in this connection is that in certain States, the imposition of taxes like the House Tax has been made an obligatory function. This may not in all cases be conducive to the healthy growth of the Panchayat institution. The right to impose taxes is certainly a big right conferred on the Panchayats, but it should be kept in their discretionary functions."

State Aid To Panchayats Essential

What then is the way out? The Congress Village Panchayat Committee has said that "under the existing circumstances, State aid is absolutely essential to enable the Panchayats to carry on

TABULAR REPRESENTATION XIV

1. Taxes	2. Fees (Licence fees on)
1. Land Cess	1. Dangerous and Offensive trade
2. Entertainment Tax	2. Factories and Workshops
3. Surcharge on Registration	3. Encroachments
4. House Tax	4. Burial grounds
5. Professional Tax	5. Quarries
6. Tax on carts and carriages	6. Pigs and dogs
7. Tax on animals	7. Private Markets and Cart-stands
8. Tax on lands	8. Entertainments

their work properly." At present, every State Government gives grants-in-aid to Panchayats, and the amount varies from State to State. The grants-in-aid in most cases are made conditional upon the Village Panchayat itself raising a certain share of the project for which amount is required. We believe that this aid should be progressively increased.

Steady Rise In Land Revenue Income Of States

We would like to draw pointed attention to another aspect of the question. As Shri U. N. Dhebar points out :[1] "The two major blows inflicted by the British Government on the Village Panchayat organisation were taking away from them their revenue and judicial functions. We have now to reverse the process and undo the wrong." Ever since programmes for the abolition of the intermediary systems have been launched in different States, which process commenced in 1951-52, the income from land revenue of the State Governments has shown a rather steep rise. The reason is obvious. The amount formerly appropriated by the intermediaries now goes to the States' treasury. It may also be borne in mind that while land revenue collections have thus increased, there has not been at the same time reduction in rent, as stipulated in the First Five-Year Plan. And while the income from land revenue of the State Governments has increased, the same cannot be said of the revenue from agricultural income-tax which has stagnated or even declined. Table 207[2] (p. 789) shows the income of Part 'A' and 'B' States from land revenue and agricultural income-tax during the years 1951-52 and 1955-56.

Increased Income From Land Revenue Should Remain With The Villages

Thus, in Part 'A' States land revenue income has gone up by

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[1] See Introduction.

[2] The table has been compiled from Statements on budgetary positions of Part 'A' and 'B' States, published in the **Reserve Bank of India Bulletin**, Vol. IV, No. 5, of May 1955.

SOURCES OF INCOME OF PANCHAYATS

3. Remunerative Enterprises	4. Communal Income	5. Miscellaneous
1. Market fees	1. Fishery rents	1. Magisterial fines
2. Cart-stand fees	2. Grass sales	2. Interest on deposits
3. Bus-stand fees	3. Unsufruct and windfall of trees	3. Contributions
4. Slaughter House fees	4. Withered and windfallen trees.	4. Grants
5. Fees on Ferries	5. Street sweeping, cattle droppings and other rubbish	5. Sale of old articles, newspapers
6. Private scavenging fees	6. Porambokes	6. Rent and product of land
7. Fees on fairs and festivals		7. Loans and advances
		8. District Board contract works

TABLE 207

(in lakhs of rupees)

Year	Part 'A' States: Total Land Revenue	Part 'A' States: Agricultural Income-Tax	Part 'B' States: Total Land Revenue	Part 'B' States: Agricultural Income-Tax
1951-52 (Accounts)	33,05	3,24	14,94	1,09
1952-53 (Accounts)	38,29	2,93	17,59	99
1953-54 (Accounts)	50,10	2,65	18,95	90
1954-55 (Budget)	52,10	2,00	19,65	1,20
1954-55 (Revised)	53,11	2,82	19,71	1,40
1955-56 (Budget)	59,88	3,03	21,73	1,17

as much as Rs. 26,83 lakhs, while in Part 'B' States the increase is only by Rs. 8 lakhs between 1951-52 and 1955-56. This increase, coming from the villages, should in all fairness go back to the villages through the Village Panchayats. If Mahatma Gandhi's passionate call for reversing the process of the flow of wealth from villages to cities is to be made good, here is a point where the best beginning can be made. To us the only way out for solving the problem of Panchayat finances appears to be to make the village bodies fully responsible for the collection of land revenue, and after paying the State's share where it stood before the abolition of the intermediary system, the remaining amount should be retained by them. In all honesty, what is of the village should remain there. This is the least that must be done. After all, when intermediaries were there, this amount was spent by them and the State got nothing of it. Now that intermediaries have gone, this amount emanating from the village should be left with the village populace for their benefit. This will solve the problem of Panchayat finances and will yield valuable returns in the immediate future.

Land Revenue Collection By Panchayats

As it is, various State Governments are giving certain percentage of land revenue to the Panchayats. The amounts vary. Then in some States the task of revenue collection has been completely assigned to the Village Panchayats, and in others only partially. There is much truth in the statement that all Panchayats today may not be developed enough to undertake the responsibility. Conscious attempts should, therefore, be made to develop them, and as and when they are considered capable for the job, the responsibility should be assigned. It has also to be borne in mind that capacities grow with responsibilities. Shri U. N. Dhebar has very rightly pointed out that one of the major blows inflicted by the British on our Village Panchayats was to take away from them the work of revenue collection. We have to undo the wrong and be bold about it. That way alone lies the solution of the problem of Panchayat finances, without solving which all talks about making the Panchayat the medium of new life in rural areas would be of not much value.

CHAPTER XLIII

ADMINISTRATIVE MACHINERY

"The problem of administration is not mechanical. It is essentially human. Unless, therefore, it is approached in that right spirit with sympathy, solicitude and understanding, the desired results become difficult of achievement. The administrators have to serve the people because that is the only purpose for which they can and they ought to exist. Every ounce of their energy, their intellect, their capacity has to be surrendered to the devoted service of their masters, the people. That has to be their all-consuming passion, and their guiding mission. It needs a full missionary approach for results to be abiding and sweet, and to carry succour and service and light and hope to those still living in hamlets and hutments throughout the country and to apply the soothing balm to the sufferers. Equally important is the consideration of keeping one's conduct above reproach and criticism and, like Caesar's wife, to be above suspicion." [1] —*GOVIND BALLABH PANT*

"The whole structure of the Government in India has changed from rather an autocratic structure to a democratic structure—a structure which was based on some outside authority to a structure which is based on an authority not only within the country but ultimately responsible to the people of the country. That is a basic change,.... Now, therefore, the services must gradually cease to think of themselves as some select coterie apart from the rest of the people. They must think of themselves as part of the people of India co-operating in this great adventure of building up India." [2]

—*JAWAHARLAL NEHRU*

"The peace and order Britain left behind were as hollow as the crust of a cake. The political institutions Britain had set up in India had no roots in the life of the people. The social outlook it had cultivated was suited for a colonial or a bourgeois system. The education system it had developed was suited for a white-collar existence. The economic approach it had nursed was rooted in profits, rewards, returns and exploitation. What is needed is an identification at an emotional level with the people and that is possible only when we identify ourselves with their problems and struggle for solution thereof, keeping the people in the centre of all our activities." [3] —*U. N. DHEBAR*

LUCKNOW'S esteemed *National Herald* (dated April 15, 1956) gave the following box news item, date-lined Hathras, April 13, under the heading "Ghost Radio Set": "The Panchayat Raj

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[1] From a Radio Talk from New Delhi, August 18, 1955.
[2] From speech at Kurnool on December 9, 1955, to an audience of public servants.
[3] From Presidential Address to Sixty-first Session of Indian National Congress at Amritsar in February 1956.

Department has demanded repair charges of a radio set, amounting to Rs. 35, from the Gaon Panchayat of Tikiri Kalan. The Gaon Panchayat denies having ever been supplied with a set by the Department."

An Inter-Connected Problem

This is a typical story which tells a lot. To the millions and millions of our countrymen dispersed in our villages, the administration and all it stands for appear exactly in the form in which it is revealed to them by the acts of omission and commission of the lower rungs of services working in the various departments that have to have relations with the people in their daily activities. The attitude and behaviour of these lower rungs of services towards the people, in turn, is entirely influenced by the attitude obtaining at the district level, which, in turn, reflects the attitude at yet higher levels. The problem of the administrative machinery is thus one inter-connected whole, and has to be viewed in its entirety.

A Difficult And Complicated Discussion

There is another aspect of this discussion. It is a delicate topic. Sharp and clear-cut views are held on the question by all concerned—the public man and the parliamentarian, the intellectuals in the universities and other places, the vast journalistic world and, last but not the least, the services themselves. Prof. J. K. Galbraith, Professor of Economics in the Graduate School of Public Administration at Harvard University, who visited India early this year as visiting professor, Indian Statistical Institute, is reported to have said in a paper: "One of the misfortunes of our time is that issues of public administration and organisation are such unattractive topics of discussion, a condition which is derived, in turn, from the all but universal incompetence of those who discuss them." Discussion of the question is further complicated by the fact that the officials are made the target of criticism, sometimes bitter, in the legislatures and the press and the platform, are blamed for inefficiency and so on, and cannot, because of their calling, reply. The officials, specially those among the higher rungs, many of whom undoubtedly are not behind any one in hard and devoted work, feel very sore on the point and are frankly pained and tortured by the criticism. A glimpse into the mind of the officials on the general question of administration and administrative machinery, however, is had from some thoughtful pronouncements the top ones among them have been making from time to time on some special, specific occasions.[1]

This aspect of the question was brought into sharp relief in the Lok Sabha sometime ago when two of the most eminent Indians of the day had to say something on the subject. Rajarshi Shri Purushottam Das Tandon was critical of officials and charged a certain Department with corruption. He had cited the example of the attempt by a clerk to obtain a pay order fraudulently for Rs. 2,800 in December 1948 in the office of the Accountant General, Central Revenues. Shri Nehru offered to place all the papers before Shri Tandonji. In the course of a statement made in the Lok Sabha on 20.12.'52, in reply to Shri Tandonji's charges, the Prime Minister said :[2] "I would submit, however, Sir, that indiscriminate attacks on the public servants are not fair and can only lead to a decline in the morale both of the public servants and the public generally, and would have other unfortunate results also." Shri Nehru added : "The Government of this country is carried on not by a few persons at the top, but by a vast army of public servants spread out all over the country who deal with thousands of crores of public money. There are unfortunately cases of fraud and embezzlement, but they represent a negligible fraction of the total sums involved and it would be very unfair to suspect wholesale this entire army of public servants on whose loyalty and trustworthiness the Government of this country depends."

Our Services : The Aspects Of Continuity And Change

We submit that the question of administrative machinery is vital and all-important and has to be viewed in a balanced manner. To condemn the services always and entirely on the one hand, and to always praise and even flatter them[3] on the other, would be a grievous mistake. The whole question has to be viewed as a process of continuity and also change. We have come across a striking passage of Prime Minister Nehru on the question in a speech in the Lok Sabha on April 12, 1955, in reply to discussion on

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[1] We take the liberty of drawing the attention of the reader to two brilliant pronouncements on the subject by two top men of the Indian Civil Services : (i) Shri N. Raghavan Pillai, I.C.S., Secretary General, Ministry of External Affairs · Convocation Address at the University of Travancore, December 18, 1953, published by the Planning Commission; and (ii) Shri D. L. Majumdar, I.C.S. : "Economics and Administrative Policy' being an extension lecture delivered at the University of Rajputana, Jaipur, on March 16, 1956; extracts have been published in the Bombay business weekly **Commerce** of March 24, 1956.

[2] **Times of India**, New Delhi Edition, 21.12.'52.

[3] See, for example some of the speeches of the Health Minister in the Part 'C' State of Delhi, in early 1953, in the State Assembly, when the question of sullage water and sanitation in the city of Delhi came up for discussion.

Constitution (Fourth Amendment Bill) as reported by the Joint Committee. He said : "We have in India achieved Independence by a process of continuity. I am free to confess that that process of continuity has brought a number of disadvantages in its train. It has. But I am quite convinced that the advantages are far greater than the disadvantages that it has brought. We gradually get rid of these disadvantages......That is a deliberate policy which has been our policy ever since we came in. We may make a mistake; that is another matter. But we have to be clear. Are we progressing—however fast we may go—making it a continuous process or a process that breaks and jumps and spurts?" And later in the speech he said : "I do not like many of the things that bureaucracy does. But I have not a shadow of doubt that the fact that we have a trained and well-trained service has been of enormous advantage to India in the last seven years." For a better appreciation of his contention, Shri Nehru drew pointed attention to countries round about Asia, who achieved freedom but have not had this advantage and suffered because of it.

The Deleterious Features

Shri Nehru's approach provides the proper perspective on the question of administrative machinery. While providing this balanced view, the Prime Minister has also from time to time pointed out the deleterious features of the services. In his own inimitable style, in the course of a series of pronouncements towards the end of 1953, he made pointed references to them. Inaugurating the Conference of State Ministers of Agriculture in the last week of September 1953, Shri Nehru emphatically remarked that the officials approach the problems of the common man with "a coat and necktie and collar mind." "Today a vast gulf separates the ordinary people from the officials; the officials do not speak the language of the common man which makes it difficult for them to convey the results of their research and labour to others". Addressing the 24th annual meeting of the Central Board of Irrigation and Power in the last week of October 1953, the Prime Minister feelingly observed that New Delhi was an "administrative jungle"—"a jungle of able administrators no doubt, but it was nevertheless a jungle." The Prime Minister also deprecated the dependence on *chaprasis*. "There was no use sending lengthy notes to the man next door in the office." "Why could not the official concerned go up to the other room or use the telephone?" The Prime Minister revealed that the number of *chaprasis* in New Delhi before the War was 3,200; it had now risen to 19,000. Talking to the Members of the Railway Board and the General Managers of the Railways in the first week of November 1953, Shri Nehru stressed the need for administrators "remaining mentally wide-awake and keeping themselves abreast, of political and scientific advancement in the present-day world". The Prime Minister asked the officers to cultivate "a dynamic outlook" in order to achieve speedy results. Laying the foundation stone of the Punjab Secretariat at Chandigarh on November 7, 1953, Shri Nehru stressed the urgent need for "changing the method of work in the Government Secretariat." "The old rules must be given a goodbye and for always, and those in the Services must realise that they have to work with a new spirit in accordance with the needs and circumstances which were born out of the establishment of a democratic form of Government."

Mr. Paul Appelby wrote in 1953 that "the Rules of Business, Secretariat Instructions and office Manuals too didactic and confining, too detailed and unimaginative....they seem to assume, and to encourage, that literal-mindedness which damps the spirit, imagination and judgement which are important to good administration. Their basic pattern undoubtedly originated in colonial administration."

The Traditions Of The British Administration

The tradition of the colonial British administration in India was necessarily one of *laissez-faire*. Mahatma Gandhi in one of his earliest historic pronouncements in India, in speech at Banaras on February 4, 1916, on the occasion of the opening of the Banaras Hindu University, had said; [1] "Many members of the Indian Civil Service are most decidedly overbearing, they are tyrannical, at times thoughtless. Many other adjectives may be used. I grant all these things and I grant also that after having lived in India for a number of years some of them become somewhat degraded...... ....The atmosphere of sycophancy and falsity that surrounds them on their coming to India demoralises them, as it would many of us."

The Indian Civilians, who in later years increased in number, and many of whom were undoubtedly highly capable men, copied all the evil traits of the British Civilian. The British, in fact, encouraged them towards it. The club life, the attitude of contempt towards the people, a type of heartlessness, care for one's own creature comforts, an ever-preparedness to flatter and please the British masters, a complete copying of Western modes of life and manners in eating, living and everything, and a sense of security from all dangers and upheavals under the protective wings of the foreign masters—all these, and a host of other factors, made the Indian Civilian an intensely disliked man in India. For some of the most fiery pronouncements on the Civilian of those days, the reader is referred to some telling passages in Nehru's *Discovery of India* and other writings.

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[1] **Tendulkar's Mahatma, Vol. I, p. 225.**

New Tasks Of The Services After Independence

In the system of administration that thus grew up, red-tape became supreme and people's interests the most neglected. When India became independent, this entire structure was inherited from the British. Due to Partition and the withdrawal of the English cadre, it was depleted and weakened. The tasks which devolved on the services after the attainment of Independence were thus explained by Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, then U.P.'s Chief Minister, in a memorable speech he delivered before the State Officers on the eve of August 15, 1947. He said: "There have been many complaints in the past. I do not want to go into them. But let us now see that no occasion for complaints is given by any of us". He pointed out: "The change of the system of administration from the bureaucratic to the democratic calls for a change in the method of approach towards administrative problems and in the method of handling them.......You have not only to imbibe a new spirit for that, but you have also to be demonstrably inspired by it, and while doing all that you have to maintain the independence of your judgement, so that you may not let your conscience and your judgement be overwhelmed by the other forces around you." And Pandit Pant added: "After all, Governments can function only through their officers, howsoever wise they may be. So, while our responsibilities are increasing, your burdens are bound to increase."

Role Of Services After Independence : An Evaluation

How did the services respond to the new tasks and responsibilities which devolved upon them? The effort required on their part, organised as they were under a different regime and with a different purpose, has to be borne in mind. That they have shown a capacity for resilience and have made a serious attempt to adjust themselves to the demands of the times will be conceded. But many things remain which have yet to be done. The fact has not been fully realised by everyone that the services exist for the people and not the people for the services. Again, the basic, fundamental fact which is essential for the conduct of public affairs, that the people are the masters and the services are really meant to serve them, is not always remembered. Members of the public are not treated the courtesy to which they are entitled in several cases. The climate of economy has not been established everywhere. Public money is not assessed with that scrupulous calculation of what it is worth, which it deserves. The legacy of the olden days, when the emoluments and the passages, etc., were determined with an eye on foreign recruits for the services and which have become altogether an anachronism, continue to exist.

The achievements also have to be borne in mind. Paula Wiking, an esteemed correspondent, reporting an interview with Prime Minister Nehru in London on June 26, 1956, says: "Nehru told us that 50 per cent of work done (in India) is good, about 25 per cent very good and the only remaining quarter below par." Indeed, if it is conceded, as is on all hands, that in the post-Independence years India has taken tremendous strides onwards, then the role of the services will have to be given due credit. In our country, however, the general tendency is to ignore the achievements, and the Colleges, Universities, Professors, the general public, in Parliament, in fact, everywhere, people have a tendency to magnify the mistakes or the defects and ignore the achievements. Professor Appelby has only very recently, about a month ago, submitted his third report on India's administrative machinery. The Professor is an experienced man. He has vast experience of administration in Europe and America. He has never been to the Soviet Union, but he is posted with the fullest details about its administrative machinery. According to reports—we have not seen the actual document Professor Appelby has submitted—he has said that he has come to India three times and here he has found "tremendous progress", the parallel of which can hardly be found anywhere else in the world. Appelby has said that it is necessary for the Indian people and the peasants in India to realise first how much they have succeeded. He has even previously classed the administration in India as among the first twelve most honest administrations in the world.

Prof. Appelby's these reported comments in his third report may be contrasted with what he said in his first report submitted in 1953. Although he classed the Government of India "among the dozen or so most advanced governments of the world", he pointed a number of defects in working of the administrative system in our country. He told us how in the scheme of administrative hierarchy there was too much "diffusion of responsibility". Referring to the system of "seniority", Prof. Appelby remarked that administration in India has "too much feudalistic heritage" and "too little human-relations orientation". The personnel is arranged self-consciously in "too firm classes" and too firm and too many special "services". "There is, in consequence, too little sense of one public service, and too much jealousy". The administrative procedures require "vigorous overhauling"; early attention should be paid to the "filing systems and the related business of work done through the hierarchal movement of paper." Prof. Appelby also mentioned, as referred to by us earlier, that the Rules of Business, Secretariat Instructions and Office Manuals seem "generally too didactic and confining, too detailed and unimaginative". They have an inevitable tendency "to encourage that literal-mindedness which damps the spirit, imagination and judgement which are important to good administration."

Need To Deal Mercilessly With Corrupt Officials

The scheme of reforming the administrative apparatus has been taken in hand and the "O" and "M" Division at the Centre is busy at implementing certain suggestions. We do not propose to review the results. The fact, nevertheless, is true that the administrative machinery yet requires drastic overhauling so that it may inspire more confidence among the people. One of the reasons why criticism of the administration persists is the recurrence of cases of corruption and embezzlement which come to light from time to time and are magnified in the press and by the opposition. The public at large fails to see them in the correct perspective—one engineer doing wrong out of 3,000 engineers working at Bhakra-Nangal is not so serious after all—and it is essential to restore in them the fullest confidence. For this there is one and only one way. The corrupt officials must be mercilessly dealt with and made an example before others who may dare to err. It is here, in the matter of punishing the guilty and the corrupt officials, that the administration has shown softness, and the consequences have not been happy. A number of scandals—too notorious and well-known to be named—came to light in the capital during the last few years, but the punishment, if any, that may have been meted out is not known. Very often the guilty ones are able to bring pressures and probably get away with it. We would not like to go into any detailed discussion about it here. The importance of being merciless and ruthless with the guilty officials, however, cannot be overemphasised.

Need To Give Up Costly Dishes And Expensive Club Life

We would like to emphasise another aspect. While the changing attitude of the highest officials cannot be denied, and the hard and valuable work they have done and are doing deserves the greatest commendation—a case in point is the appreciation by the President of the Republic of the work of Shri Tarlok Singh, I.C.S., as Joint Secretary of the National Planning Commission, for which he was awarded Patdma-Vibhushan—it is equally true that many officials at the top continue to live in their make-believe world of clubs and all the rest of it, continue to hate the people and the 'mob' rather than love it, pine for the British days gone never to return, and, on the whole, intensely dislike all this democracy and Ministers and all the lot of it. In this connection, we would like to point to an article by Shri B. N. Datar, Central Deputy Minister for Home Affairs, in the *A.I.C.C. Economic Review* of July 15, 1955. He has touched on the question of scales of pay, has said that necktie-collar mentality must go and pleaded for simple and unassuming dress, has asked the officers to give up costly dishes and expensive club life, and has said that informal and private criticism of Ministers in clubs must go, nor should the officers bypass the Ministers. He has rightly pointed out that greatness does not lie in money, and the argument of corruption being a product of inadequate pay is untenable, that considerable opportunities for service remain open to officers and that desk work should be combined with human approach.

Austerity—Eradication Of Corruption

Under the conditions of today, austerity should be the keynote for the solution of India's burning problems. Luxury and unnecessary expenditure must be drastically curtailed. This austerity should be applicable at all levels. Further, for the removal of corruption the following suggestions are offered for whatever they are worth :

(1) Creation of a new economic civil service, which would be inspired by a quite different ideal than hitherto followed;

(2) Enactment of legislation for the exemplary punishment of officials found guilty of corruption;

(3) Secret commission composed of High Court and Supreme Court judges with full powers to investigate all cases of corruption;

(4) Secret service to detect cases of corruption in the Secretariat.

(5) Declaration from all Government employees about their movable and immovable property and their periodical review.

Officials At The Lower Rungs

In discussing the administrative machinery, if we have hitherto confined our attention to the upper rungs of the services, it is not because we consider the lower rungs to be working satisfactorily, but because in the matter of Government services, the top profoundly influences the bottom and not vice versa. The former British regime was heartless and ruthless and so every *Thanedar* and the police constable, and even the village *chowkidar* and the *patwari* behaved as absolute lords. Indeed, to the poor crushed villager. the *patwari* appeared as the pinnacle of all might and power. An interesting story is told that in days of yore, an old village woman, on getting very pleased with a certain kindly district collector for a kind deed, blessed him by saying, "O Lord Collector ! May you become a *patwari*." Actually, the utter corruption and heartlessness of the lower officials in British times was in no way less, perhaps many times more than what could be found at the higher levels. And though the lower fellow is changing, and will change, the old streaks nevertheless continue and persist. According to some, however, the lower layers of services have deteriorated further. Shri U. N. Dhebar has recorded[1]: "I have had the privilege during the course of the last year of talking to some senior civil servants in Delhi and elsewhere. I could see their anxiety about the falling standards in administrative efficiency at the middle and lower layers of services."

Official Interference In Panchayat Working

In our State Chapters, we have referred to cases where the police has interfered with and suppressed the Panches. In one State as a whole, the entire class of high officials regarded the development of Panchayats as being tantamount to a curb on their authority and were frankly unhelpful to them. This we regard as the most dangerous thing for Panchayat development. The development of initiative of the Panchayats has to be fully encouraged and not opposed or interfered. Let us not forget that we are recreating the Village Panchayats among a backward and illiterate people, and let us also remember that our Indian people, have an inherent genius for social experiments. The system of functioning as a community is in their blood. It was present centuries ago. What we are afraid is, that in many cases these Village Panchayats are not allowed full play, and are too much interfered with from above. In this connection we would like to point out what the *Report of the Congress Village Panchayat Committee* has to say. The *Report* says: "Officials at the tehsil headquarters have a tendency to behave with the Sarpanches like they did with the village *patwaris*, etc., in olden days, in the sense that they are summoned to the headquarters and ordered about to do things and show result. This, indeed, is the most dangerous thing for the full, unfettered growth of the Panchayat institution and must in all cases be avoided."

Panchayats Should Be Treated With Respect

We believe the Congress Village Panchayat Committee's remarks deserve the greatest attention. If Panchayats are to grow, the Panches must be treated with due respect and given proper status in social life. The *Gramani* of old was a highly respected person, was a king-maker, and when Rama killed Ravana, he was compared to a General and a *Gramani*. As a part of this process, it is of the utmost importance that the authority of the Panches must be considered supreme over the village; the village *chowkidars*, the revenue-records-keeper and others must be under the authority and control of the Panchayats and liable to dismissal on complaints from them. The *Thanedars* and the *Tehsildars* must also show the Panchayats the respect they deserve.

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[1] From Presidential Address to Amritsar Congress.

The Changing Scene

That things are changing for the better, and as the Panchayat experiment proceeds further and village development advances, new atmosphere is being created, is borne out by the latest Report of the Programme Evaluation Organisation of the Planning Commission on the third year's working of the Community Projects and National Extension Service, published in May 1956. Says the Report : "The main contribution of the Community development programme during the past three years has not been so much in the physical improvements as in the change in outlook that has been created both among the officials and the people". The Report adds : "The people have demonstrated convincingly their desire for progress and their willingness not only to adopt but also to contribute towards any measure about the utility of which they are convinced."

This is a good augury for the future. We are convinced that the innate goodness of our people, their latent capacity for close co-operation, will ultimately assert itself. The administrative machinery, however, must increasingly be attuned to changing times. The process of continuity must also be a process of change.

We will conclude this Chapter by quoting from a Radio Talk from New Delhi on June 25, 1954, by Shri Y. N. Sukthankar, Secretary, National Planning Commission. He was speaking on "Planning and Public Administration". He quoted a noted administrator as follows : "Promptness, accessibility, brevity and kindliness are the best engines of Government." We would like this maxim to be made the consciousness of the entire administrative personnel in India, from top to bottom.

CHAPTER XLIV

PANCHAYATS AND RURAL ELECTRIFICATION

"Electricity is generally considered to be a symbol of the modern industrial age. There is no doubt that the invention of electric energy has given us many amenities and comforts which we value in life. It has also provided man with power to make the best of the natural resources at his disposal with a view to increasing the production of the necessities of daily life and eventually to making life fuller and happier. I am sure the energy which is being released today will also make a valuable contribution in our resettlement and rehabilitation efforts.

"As for the part which electricity plays in the field of industry, I would like to say a few words by way of caution. The energy now made available should be used in a way in harmony with the existing man-power in the area. That is to say, electricity should supplement, rather than replace, the hands at work at present. While employing electric power for increased production and for relieving man of degrading or hazardous undertakings, we have to see that, as far as possible, this does not reduce the present level of employment. Actually, we all hope that new and wider avenues of employment will be opened for our young men by this project coming into operation. As far as I know, this is possible only by giving proper encouragement to cottage and small-scale industries, which can also benefit from cheap electric power.

"I am confident that this power and light which we are commissioning, will, in the near future, transform these States into regions of material prosperity and human welfare. May this light be symbolic of the new illumined, consciousness of our Nation! I feel like praying with our ancient seers, Tamaso ma jyotirgamaya : *Lead us from darkness into light."*[1]

—DR. RAJENDRA PRASAD

PIERRE Ceresole, a Western journalist asked Gandhiji in 1935 the following question :

"But what about the great inventions? You would have nothing to do with electricity?"

Gandhiji replied : "Who said so? If we could have electricity in every village home, I should not mind villagers plying their implements and tools with the help of electricity. But then the village communities or the State would own power houses."[2]

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[1] From speech at Ganguwal Power Project in February 1955.

[2] Tendulkar's Mahatma, Vol. IV, p. 34.

Position Of Rural Electrification Today

The question is : where do we stand today in relation to the supply of electric power to our villages?

Over 10,000 villages and about 500 small towns are expected to be electrified during the Second Five-Year Plan period under the programme of "expansion of power facilities for increasing employment opportunities." The schemes of various States are estimated to cost about Rs. 90 crores. These facts were disclosed in the annual report of the Union Ministry of Irrigation and Power for 1955-56, submitted to Parliament in March 1956.

Under the First Plan, a sum of Rs. 20.67 crores was sanctioned for the grant of loans to States for such schemes. About 800 small towns and villages were expected to get power supply by 1955-56. The Directorate of Rural Electrification was set up during the year to formulate standard construction practices.

The following table [1] shows the number of electrified towns and villages at the end of 1954 :

TABLE 208

Population range	No. of towns or villages in this group	No. of towns or villages with public electricity supply	Percentage of towns or villages with public electricity supply
Over 1,00,000	73	73	100.00
50,000 to 1,00,000	111	110	99.20
20,000 to 50,000	401	329	82.00
Upto 20,000	5,60,522	5,039	0.90
TOTAL	5.61.107	5.551	0.90

The *Second Five-Year Plan* says : "In towns and villages with a population of less than 10,000, electrification raises difficult economic problems, especially in the villages. Most villages are comparatively distant from developed power sources. It is estimated that the average cost of providing distribution lines and sub-station equipments would be Rs. 60,000 to Rs. 70,000 per village, and if all villages in the country were to be electrified, the capital outlay involved in the distribution lines alone would exceed Rs. 3,000 crores." And the *Plan* adds : "The programme of rural electrification has thus to be on a phased basis. In the Second Plan, out of a total outlay of Rs. 427 crores on power programmes, about 75 crores will be spent on the electrification of small towns and villages." The following table gives the breakdown in terms of population range, and the number of towns and villages to be electrified by 1961 :

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[1] India 1956. Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Delhi, 1956.

TABLE 209 [1]

Population range	Total number according to 1951 Census	Number electrified as at March 1956	Number to be electrified as at March 1961
Over 1,00,000	73	73	73
50,000 — 1,00,000	111	111	111
20,000 — 50,000	401	366	401
10,000 — 20,000	856	350	856
5,000 — 10,000	3,101	1,200	2,659
Less than 5,000	5,56,565	5,300	13,900
TOTAL	5,61,107	7,400	18,000

It will be seen that about 10,600 additional towns and villages, of which 8,600 will have less than 5,000 population, are programmed to be electrified in the next five year period which will mean an increase of 140 per cent over the present level.

The Problems Of Rural Electrification

It is the general experience even in the Western countries where the standard of living is high and farm holdings are large, and where the cost of electrification is made as low as possible, that rural electrification involves losses and the burden of losses falls upon the general tax-payer. For a country like India, the problem is much more difficult because the standard of living is low, farm holdings are small and consequently the density of load per unit area will be much lower than that in Western countries. Rural electrification may be a useful means for upgrading the standard of living, but there are many other most essential needs of the rural population, such as proper nutrition, clothing, housing, education, sanitation and communications, which have a greater priority, and all of which will draw upon the tax-payer's income. In other words, therefore, only a limited amount of the national income could be set apart for rural electrification. Utilisation of electric power involves, however, not only a financial investment on the part of the consumer, but also special level of knowledge of operation of the electric device to be used. The planners will have also to study carefully the conditions of living in rural areas in order to find out where, how and how much electric power could be utilised by the villager. There is already severe under-employment of human power in villages; it is also known that India has got 190 million cattle population, largest in the world.

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[1] Second Five-Year Plan, p. 342.

Bullock power is portable and useful in a variety of ways, such as ploughing, water drawing, transport and manure while living, and hide after death. How and to what extent electric power can serve as a substitute to a bullock? What would be the industries that would be carried on such a scale that they will require mechanical power and what is the standard of intelligence required in the villages to organise, operate and manage them?

Cautious Approach

These and allied problems have engaged and are engaging the attention of our planners. Naturally, therefore, they have been driven to a policy of cautiousness in the procedure of rural electrification and it has been considered wise to limit the scope of it, as a first stage, to the rural areas surrounding the already well electrified places.[1] It would be found that the rural population surrounding cities and towns is quite sufficiently enlightened to be able to handle machinery; fair means of transport and communications generally exist already in this area; marketing is easy, and technical assistance could be arranged at low costs. Electrification of such rural areas around the existing centres of electric supply will probably cover a further population of 30 to 40 millions.

Replying to the debate in the Lok Sabha on the demand for grants in respect of the Irrigation and Power Ministry on April 3, 1956, the Union Minister for Irrigation and Power and Planning, Shri Gulzarilal Nanda, gave the following statistics regarding electrification in rural areas. Out of 2,367 villages with a population of five to ten thousand, 258 were electrified in 1950-51, that is, about 11 per cent. Under the First Plan this percentage went upto 32. In the case of places with less than five thousand population, the percentage was just 0.5 in 1950-51, and it rose to 0.8 per cent only during the First Plan. Shri Nanda added: "Provision of power to rural areas in view of small and scattered loads is not a paying proposition. We have had several discussions and seminars where engineers met and considered this problem. It was clear that rural electrification has to be subsidised. Proposals were made and the view was taken that each State must first make its own working self-supporting in the sense that, if it has any profit on urban electrification, it must divert that to rural electrification before it asks for any help. Figures are being collected. Meanwhile, some advance is being made. Under the First Plan only interest was to be paid—capital had not to be paid—during the first five years. Now it has been decided that for the first years, no interest will be charged."

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[1] Says the **Second Five-Year Plan**: "In comparision with large urban areas, rural areas lack what is described as load density. The capital cost as well as the operation and maintenance charges are, therefore, much higher. The most practical approach to the problem is, in the first instance, to undertake extension of power supply to villages which lie in proximity to town areas where power supply exists. Similarly, wherever possible, supply lines should be constructed from grid transmission lines to villages lying near their routes. Further, in the financial working of the schemes, the urban and rural schemes should be integrated so that the surplus from the revenues realised from urban and industrial consumers can be utilised for reducing rates to rural consumers. There is justification for adjusting tariffs for urban and industrial consumers with a view to carrying out this policy. For rural electrification schemes it may not always be possible to apply the usual yardstick of financial return." (p. 340).

Rural Electrification In The States

Rural electrification in India is thus going to be a rather slow process, at least in the coming years. Compared to the total number of villages in the country, the number of villages to be electrified will appear insignificant. But, as is estimated, if even 30 to 40 million of our rural population are likely to be covered, it is going to mean a big thing in the life of our rural people. The progress may be slow but it is on sure lines. Replying to a question in the Lok Sabha on April 10, 1956, Union Deputy Minister for Irrigation and Power, Shri Jaisukh Lal Hathi, said that the States of Travancore-Cochin, Bombay, Mysore, Hyderabad, Madras, Himachal Pradesh, Saurashtra and Punjab had set up separate organisations for rural electrification.

What rural electrification is meaning in the life of the rural people is indicated by a report from Madras. Madras State leads all other States of India in rural electrification. The number of villages electrified in the State as at the end of each year from 1950-51 onwards is given below :

1951	1,613
1951-52	1,820
1952-53	1,961
1953-54	2,089
1954-55	2,392
1955-56 (anticipated)	2,900

The number of villages electrified during the Plan period will be about 1,300. Considering that the target as per the Plan was 250 villages to be electrified for the Composite State (including Andhra) the actual achievement of about 250 villages per year even for the present Madras State may be considered very satisfactory, especially in spite of the acute financial stringency that prevailed in 1952-53 and the first half of 1953-54.

The most popular use of electricity in the village is for agriculture by means of electric-driven pumpsets for lifting water. The number of agricultural consumers in the areas served by the Government directly and by the distributing licensees taking power from the Government is given below :

	1950-51	1954-55	1955-56 (anticipated)
Number of pumpsets served directly by Government ..	11,859	19,676	24,500
Number of pumpsets in licensees' area	2,767	4,978	5,500
Total number of agricultural pumpsets	14,626	24,654	30,000

More than 15,000 pumpsets would have been added to the grid at the end of the Plan period.

Next to agriculture, the use of electricity in villages is becoming popular for the various rural industries. The expansion of rural industries may be gauged from the following figures for the areas served directly by the Department :

	1950-51	1954-55	1955-56 (anticipated)
Number of rural industries ..	1,556	2,455	3,000
Connected load in KW ..	19,810	27,361	33,000

The rural industries comprise mostly industries for processing the village produce, like tea-curing, rice hulling, cotton ginning, sugarcane-crushing, groundnut decorticating, flour milling and oil *chakkis* and a few industries like fountain pen making, silk throwing, tape-weaving and woollen carpet drugget industry.

In fact, rural electrification programmes are underway in many States of India. Punjab's Chief Minister, Sardar Pratap Singh Kairon, inaugurating the State-wide celebration of the Second Five-Year Plan Week at Jullundur on April 24, 1956, said that by the end of the Second Plan nearly 5,000 villages of Punjab would be electrified. The Himachal Pradesh Government hopes to electrify about 700 villages during the Second Five-Year Plan period. Similar schemes are being implemented in some other States, notably Mysore, Uttar Pradesh, Travancore-Cochin.

Rural Electrification Demonstration Centres

The fifth session of the Sub-Committee on Electric Power of the Committee on Industry and Trade of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East, which met at Bangalore in March 1956, discussed an interesting paper on rural electrification in the Region. It advanced the idea of Rural Electrification Demonstration Centres. The paper said : "Several countries in the ECAFE region are actively considering the use of electric power for increasing productivity in rural areas both in the agricultural and industrial sectors. To aid this objective the Rural Electrification Demonstration Centres are helpful as they demonstrate the use of mechanized equipment of the types and sizes which can be conveniently adapted for the requirements of agricultural processing and of rural industries. The objective is to enable the rural worker to increase his production by the use of mechanized equipment and thus to increase his earnings. In selecting equipment care has to be taken to ensure that it is of an appropriate size and that the overall cost of operation including annual charges would result in reducing the cost of production. In the adoption of new machines and processes a certain amount of time is needed to convince rural workers of their benefits. It is felt that one or more demonstration centres in each country would assist in expediting this process. The operations of farmers and rural artisans are sometimes on too small a scale to enable economical use of machines. In such cases the adoption of "community facilities" on a co-operative basis enables rural population to derive the benefit of mechanized processes."

Need To Mobilise The Support Of The Rural Community

It may be assumed that with the extension of electric power to our rural areas, some such demonstration schemes will be taken in hand by us. In this, as in so many other aspects, rural electrification will require the support and co-operation of the entire community for its success. The Second Five-Year Plan has rightly emphasised : "For the successful implementation of rural schemes, a large amount of co-operative effort on the part of the people has to be organised by national extension and other field staff. In an area in which the demand for irrigation pumping or electrical working of small industries can be developed, the Community Project workers in co-operation with villagers, should make a careful survey of present and prospective needs and prepare schemes for utilising electricity to the greatest possible advantage of the village economy. In many cases the people will be able to contribute a portion of the cost and provide labour for construction. Similarly, consumers' co-operative societies can be formed for the purchase of motors, pumps, etc., on easy terms and for servicing them. Under the Second Plan there is provision for extending power to over 10,000 villages, but through an intensive co-operative approach, more can be achieved with the existing financial provision."

This same point of mobilising popular support for the success of rural electrification was emphasised by Shri V. T. Krishnamachari, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, in a Radio Talk from Delhi on February 22, 1956. Shri Krishnamachari said : "For the successful implementation of rural schemes, there should be a large amount of co-operative effort from the people through the National Extension Service and Community Project Agencies. In an area in which demand for irrigation pumping or electrical working of small industries can be developed, these agencies, in co-operation with villagers, should make a careful survey of present and prospective needs and prepare schemes for utilizing electricity to the maximum possible extent. Necessary technical guidance and assistance should be given to them by the State Government, but the initiative should come from the people. They may, in many cases, contribute a portion of the finances and provide labour for construction."

Electricity And Modernisation Of Villages

This popular mobilisation at the village level can be successfully achieved through the Village Panchayats. In fact, electricity to villages will be opening an entirely new chapter in the hoary history of our countryside, and with it will come modernisation and a new life. In fact, nothing will modernise our villages more than the availability of electric power. In the Soviet Union, soon after the Revolution, Lenin insisted on implementing a great plan of electrification of Russia. It was a great idea and it transformed Russia of the *muzhik* as nothing else did. Prof. Chandrashekhar has remarked :[1] "Today Russia, like India, is a country with predominantly rural population, but unlike India she has made great progress, not only in bringing the usual urban conveniences to the rural population, but in actually urbanizing the countryside, in the better sense of the term."

Village Panchayats And Electric Supply In Rural Areas

It is, therefore, of the utmost importance to associate the Village Panchayats at the village level in schemes of rural electrification. How best this can be done is for the experts to suggest. As laymen, we feel that supply of power to village individuals and families will involve local records, local meter-reading, and allied matters, more or less the responsibilities, though on a miniature scale, like those undertaken by small municipalities which are responsibie for the supply of electric power to the urban areas. These responsibilities, we suggest, should be entrusted to the Panchayats, keeping in view the need to adequately equip them and educate them for the fulfilment of the job. Individuals, as also institutions, grow with responsibility, and the beneficial effects of associating the village bodies with schemes of rural electrification from their very inception cannot be overemphasised. We are confident, our planners will give their thought to the subject.

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[1] **India's Population : Facts and Policy, Op. cit., p. 48.**

CHAPTER XLV

PANCHAYAT JOURNALISM, LITERATURE, LIBRARIES AND FOLK CULTURE

"It should be our endeavour to locate at least one library in every village in the country. The use of libraries should not be limited to a few scholars or pandits but the mass of people must begin to read. In fact every library should be a sort of university in itself." [1]

"I would prefer being a nomad in the hills to being a member of stock exchanges, where one is made to sit and listen to noises that are ugly to a degree. Is that the civilisation we want the tribal people to have? I hope not. I am quite sure that the tribal folk, with their civilisation of song and dance, will last until long after stock exchanges have ceased to exist." [2]

—JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

"Countries which have elected the democratic way of life cannot afford to keep vast numbers of the people illiterate and ignorant. Ultimately it is the quality of man-power that decides the position, prestige and future of a nation. We must, therefore, make special efforts to improve our library facilities so that the opportunity of coming abreast with the rest of the world is offered to our people.... India is by and large a rural country. The rural people are in many respects less advanced than their fellow citizens in urban areas. The need for a special library service is for these reasons far greater in rural areas than in towns." [3]

—ABUL KALAM AZAD

GANDHIJI presided over Gujarat Literary Conference at Ahmedabad on November 2, 1936.

Gandhiji On Literature For "The Poor Man At The Well"

In his address he asked a pointed question : "For whose sake are we going to have our literature?" And he replied : "Not certainly for the great gentry of Ahmedabad. They can afford to have literary men and have great libraries in their homes. But what about the poor man at the well who with unspeakable abuse is goading his bullocks to pull the big leather bucket?" [4]

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[1] From speech at the Gujarat Vidyapeeth Library, January 5, 1955.

[2] From a speech at the opening session of the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Areas Conference held at New Delhi in 1954. Reproduced from **Social Welfare**.

[3] From Inaugural Address to UNESCO Seminar on Development of Public Libraries in Asia, New Delhi, October 6, 1956.

[4] Tendulkar's **Mahatma**, Vol. IV, p. 114.

Indeed, this is a very interesting and moving speech of Gandhiji bearing on the type of literature needed for the country. He referred to Dean Farrar's book on the life of Christ, which he wrote "in faith and prayer for the masses of England, in a language which all of them could understand." He twitted the litterateurs : "Our literary men will pour on Kalidas and Bhavabhuti, and English authors, and will give us imitations. I want them to go to villages, study them, and give something life-giving." Later he said : "Do not say that your intellects would lose their freshness in villages by being chocked in their close atmosphere, it is your close intellect with which you have gone there. If you go there with your eyes and ears and intellects open, they will be all the fresher for a live contact with the virgin village air."

Panchayats In Our Daily Press

The position with regard to our literature, and publications in general, has apparently not very much advanced from where Gandhiji found it in 1936. Real literature for our village folk, "the man at the well", with a new message of hope and faith, is yet few and far between. The problem of Panchayats likewise, in the main, remains neglected. The great English dailies of India give it but scant attention. Some Panchayat news items from some careful correspondent, or some official handouts from the State Government headquarters are about all that one may see there. They do write on agricultural problems and land reforms, but Panchayats rarely come in for editorial attention. During the last few years, probably the only occasion when our leading English dailies gave editorial attention to Panchayats was when the *Report of the Congress Village Panchayat Committee* was published in 1954.

As for the Hindi dailies (we regret we are not in a position to write about the coverage of Panchayats by the other great language papers of India), their attention to Panchayats is certainly far better than those of the English counterparts. They carry many more news items and correspondents' reports on Panchayats. The same, however, cannot be said about their editorial attention.

Spate Of Local Journals On Panchayats

In the last few years, however, as though symbolic of the great virility of the Panchayat movement, a very large number of journals, published and edited locally, from small towns and places, poorly or tolerably produced according as the resources are available, have appeared in the Hindi areas. They are essentially local journals, mostly weeklies or monthlies, confined to their district or one or two neighbouring ones. Only a few of these may be having a State-wide circulation. In their respective localities, they are widely read, and influence considerably for good or ill, mostly for good, Panchayat working and thinking. Besides these non-official attempts, Panchayat Departments of some State Governments are publishing official Panchayat journals which go to every Panchayat of the State. Financed from the public exchequer, they are generally well-produced, though, looking at the resources available, they cannot be regarded editorially as good as may be expected. We give below a list of these journals, by no means exhaustive, which we have come across :

1. *Uttar Pradesh Panchayati Raj,* monthly, published from Lucknow by the State Information Department; fifth year of publication.
2. *Panchayat,* official monthly journal of the Rajasthan Panchayat Department; second year of publication.
3. *Panchayat-Sandesh,* official monthly journal of the Bihar Rajya Panchayat Parishad; second year of publication.
4. *Vindhya Panchayat,* non-official weekly published from Rewa; second year of publication.
5. *Panchayat Raj Gazette,* non-official weekly published from Agra (now ceased publication).
6. *Gram Sevak,* non-official monthly published from Patna, devoted to Rural and Panchayat problems; fourth year of publication.
7. *Gaon,* non-official monthly published from Patna, devoted to Rural and Panchayat problems; nineteenth year of publication.
8. *Gram-Vikas,* monthly journal of Jaipur District Board, Rajasthan; second year of publication.
9. *Nava-Vikas Jyoti,* monthly journal of Tonk District Board, Rajasthan; second year of publication.
10. *Gram-Sandesh,* unofficial weekly published from Ganganagar, Rajasthan; second year of publication.
11. *Janata,* unofficial weekly published from Hissar, Punjab; second year of publication.
12. *Gram-Nirman,* unofficial weekly published from Ranchi, Bihar; fourth year of publication.
13. *Adarsha Kisan,* unofficial weekly published from Chapra; third year of publication.
14. *Kisani Samachar,* monthly published by the Agriculture Department of Madhya Pradesh Government; devoted mainly to agricultural technique; very well-edited, the best journal of its kind in Hindi; eighth year of publication.
15. *Kheti,* monthly published by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research; devoted to agricultural technique; ninth year of publication.

16. *Dharati-Ke-Lal,* weekly published by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, devoted to agricultural technique; fourth year of publication.

Panchayats And Other Journals

Besides these journals, innumerable weeklies of the Hindi areas carry every week special Panchayat column in which Panchayat articles and news are prominently featured. To name only a few, we may mention *Prakash* of Patna, *Amar Jyoti* of Jaipur, *Naya Bharat* of Lucknow, *Senani* of Bikaner, *Marwar-Sandesh* of Shivganj, Ajmer, *Rashtra-Vani* of Ajmer, *Yugantar* of Jhansi, etc. *Apka Swasthya,* an excellent monthly on health matters, the best of its kinds, published from Banaras, regularly carries a feature on health topics for Panchayats written by Dr. Koshlapati Tripathi. The simple and lucid style in which complicated health problems, anatomy of the human body, causes of diseases and their cure, first aid, and other allied matters are explained under this column deserves the highest commendation and we are confident it must be proving highly educative for our Panchayats.

The only section of the Hindi press which has not found it worth while to devote even a cursory attention to Panchayat problems are what have been called 'literary' monthly magazines. These 'literary' monthlies, not more than three dozen, claiming much for themselves but largely reflecting the current decadence in Hindi literary world, have not found the Panchayat topic interesting enough. Highly obtruse discussions on correct 'grammatical' forms in Hindi, on the use of *matras,* self-glorification, and 'art' and yet more of 'art' interest them much more. There appears to be an unseemly haste to tell the non-Hindi writers of Hindi as to what their language-form, and specially its grammar should be. Indeed, passions are high on the issue of grammar. In grammatical errors is visualised the lamentable end of Indian culture, and even our existence as a nation! Long articles are devoted to probes into, investigations of and exercises in literary forms of the sur-realist type, and the poor villagers and their Panchayats are completely forgotten and ignored.

What Needs To Be Done: State Responsibility

We have attempted above a brief review of Panchayats as they occur in our world of journalism. If the great English dailies of India devote even a little attention to Panchayats and give special correspondent reports of some extra good and extra bad Panchayats, and otherwise feature Panchayat problems, they will in no time succeed in making the entire nation conscious of this new, developing phase in our Indian life. What the Hindi dailies have done for

Panchayats is creditable, but more attention is needed. The Panchayat and agricultural weeklies and monthlies, some of which we have listed above, can be divided into two wings—the official and the non-official. These have rendered yeoman service to the cause of Panchayats. The official journals have sometimes reflected the inefficiency and bureaucracy which goes with our administrative apparatus today, but, on the whole, the help they have rendered to growing rural consciousness has to be recognised. The non-official, small local weeklies, inspite of their poor production, poor revenues, and limited editorial capacity, have rendered and are rendering the greatest service to the cause of Panchayats and deserve the highest praise. As for the Hindi monthlies, we are afraid, much may not be expected of them, incorrigibly busy as they are in 'art' pursuits, finding each other's holes and self-aggrandisement.

Under the existing conditions, we believe it should be state responsibility, in the States as also at the Centre, to plan out the production and regular flow of low-priced pamphlets and booklets for the use of the Panchayats and Panchayat workers. It may be worth while to open a section in the Central Publications Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting for the purpose. A high-level advisory board may be set up to plan out the publications and generally help in the preparation of Panchayat literature.

The Question Of Panchayat Libraries

The question of Panchayat libraries deserves special attention. We have quoted Shri Nehru's idea that every village must have a library. We would modify it to the extent that not every village, but every Panchayat must have a library. India's poverty in the matter of libraries was high-lighted by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in his address to the UNESCO Seminar on Development of Public Libraries in Asia at New Delhi on October 6, 1955. Maulana Saheb said : "The second reason is closely linked with the first and may be regarded as both cause and effect. Almost all the countries represented in this Seminar lack public libraries. This is both a measure and a cause of weakness in general educational standard. India has a population of over 360 millions living in more than half a million towns and villages, but possesses only 32,000 libraries. In fact, many of them are libraries only in name for they lack some of the essential pre-requisites of a good library. There is hardly one book for every 50 persons and more than 10 per cent have to content themselves with one book per year. Even if we make allowances for the huge mass of illiterate people in the country, a literate adult in India reads on the average only one book per year. If we compare this with the situation in the United States or the United Kingdom our weakness is shown up glaringly. With almost full literacy, the per capita annual use of books in the United States is almost four while in the United Kingdom it is seven. In others words, a literate man in the U.K. reads at least seven times as much as a literate man in India."

The question of village libraries has been discussed in an excellent article by Dr. Jagdish Sharma[1] in the *A.I.C.C. Economic Review*, Amritsar Session Special Number (Vol. VII, No. 19-20, Whole No. 140-141, dated February 11, 1956). Dr. Sharma has summarised the objectives of village libraries as follows :

1. A village library is to help village children and adults in understanding the principles of Basic Education and keeping fresh their knowledge which they gain during their study and training period.

2. It is to help our farmer increase his efficiency at the job, and provide the means of his knowledge about food and chemistry of soils; about crops, markets and livestock; about producers' and consumers' co-operatives; about carpentry, farm mechanics and elementary engineering.

3. It is to help him preserve and enrich the soil which is our nation's heritage; it must give him the means of learning about rainfall and drainage, about the land uses appropriate to different types of soil, about the production and utilization of trees, and in some parts of India, the growing of timber.

4. It is to help a villager to understand India's social, political, economic and various current nation-building schemes and projects. It can also make him familiar with occupational tendencies, population trends, and inter-relations of villages, towns and big cities.

5. A village library should be an aid to the building of wholesome family life, it must supply materials relating to community and individual health, child care and Basic Education.

6. It must provide materials which can enlighten him in eradicating from his mind the deep-rooted ideas of communalism, casteism, provincialism and untouchability. It can also help him in re-discovering himself and be an important link in contributing his share in building up a new, progressive and prosperous India.

7. Finally, it must lead individual members of village into the use of books, pamphlets, files, etc., for recreation and the growth of imagination and spirit.

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[1] Dr. Jagdish Sharma is a thoughtful writer and thinker on the subject of libraries in India. His two giant bibliographies on Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru have won wide appreciation and his latest bibliography on *Vinoba and Bhoodan* (published by the A.I.C.C.) has just been published. We take the liberty of quoting his ideas on the subject of village libraries at some length.

Nature Of Panchayat Library Material

Dr. Jagdish Sharma then says : "Some readers might ask how our illiterate and neo-literate villagers can read books. They might also point out that libraries are meant only for scholars and not for India's simple villagers. But unlike the ancient conception of a library, today it is an important media of mass education. Especially in India, libraries can play an important role in imparting mass education on a larger scale. But in order to make best use of libraries in our villages we have to consider two important issues :

(1) Nature of the village library materials, and

(2) Specially trained librarians."

On these two aspects Dr. Sharma has advanced some thought provoking ideas to which we would like to draw the attention of our readers.

Nature of materials : "Most of our villagers are illiterate. For the clientele of this nature we have to have small illustrated books printed in bold type. Their contents must deal with the subjects of their liking. Besides, we have to have (a) Weekly Wall Papers to keep the villagers posted with daily news; (b) Big Charts illustrating development schemes, i.e., photographs of construction of various dams, maps of villages and districts, etc.; (c) Documentary films depicting social, political, economic and agricultural problems and their solutions. There should also be a good collection of slides demonstrating important ways and means of health and hygiene; (d) Each library must also be provided with a radio set. New programmes for the benefit of our villagers should be introduced at the All India Radio Stations in various States; (e) Each library must be attached either to Village Panchayat Hall or school buildings so that people can enjoy, without any inconvenience, film shows and can attend lectures delivered by specially invited experts of social psychology."

How To Popularise Panchayat Libraries ?

Dr. Sharma's suggestion that each Library must be attached to a Village Panchayat should be borne in mind. He has further suggested that after a village library is established, the Panchayats must carry on a campaign to popularise the usefulness of library service. The following are his suggestions :

(1) Library exhibits, i.e., posters, photographs and charts should be attractively arranged at the local weekly village market, district and State fairs; (2) Illustrated posters should be placed on library wall, in windows, on outside notice boards, and in other outside places; (3) The rural librarians ought to join village organisations in order to learn how they can serve their readers most effectively; (4) Village libraries which are provided with book-

vans, may they be driven by oxen, horses, camels, should make effective use of them by moving in the villages, giving publicity to the village libraries and explain the possibilities of library service in solving some special problems of villagers; (5) Village libraries should co-operate in every possible way with headmasters of schools, teachers, District Health Officers and others in order to make known the efficiency of library service; (6) A homelike, inviting building and a friendly spirit of service on the part of all library employees are distinct assets; (7) Annual celebrations are useful, such as library day, the birthday of Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, with its special week for children, Gandhi Jayanti, etc.

We are confident that the importance of Panchayat libraries will be increasingly realised by our administrators and we do hope that even a little attention from them will lead to their great development.

Panchayats And Folk Culture

The aspect of folk culture, and their revival through Panchayats also needs to be emphasised. Through the long march of India's history, through all the trials and tribulations, the Indian peasantry has preserved the local village art forms, developed centuries ago, when they were happy and contented. These village tunes and art forms, in their variety and richness, have been preserved by groups living in the humblest huts. Of late, some attention has gone towards them of the art centres growing in our cities, but their great variety is not yet fully known and needs further investigation. Rahul Sankrityayana has devoted much valuable time of his precious existence to an investigation of folk art in outlying areas, and has written illuminatingly on the subject.[1] The Sangeet Natak Akadami, set up by the Government of India, under its energetic secretary, Kumari Nirmala Joshi, has done much valuable work in investigating these folk art forms and bringing them before metropolitan audiences, who have simply been thrilled by them.

These forms, however, need further investigation and revival and even enrichment. We suggest that in this aspect too, the Panchayats can play a great part. Panchayats must be encouraged to have a cultural wing. Competitions may be organised and awards given to the Panchayat producing the best display. Non-official art bodies, fast developing in the cities, should give attention to Panchayat work in this connection and help them financially, if possible. State patronage for Panchayat art revival would go a long way to help this growth.

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[1] A glimpse into the variety of our village art forms is provided in a valuable pamphlet entitled **Folk Dances of India**, published by the Publications Division of the Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, March 1956.

CHAPTER XLVI

PANCHAYATS AND THE RADIO[1]

> *"I had at one time believed that the springs of civilisation would issue out of the heart of Europe. But today when I am about to quit this world that faith has gone bankrupt altogether. Today I live in the hope that the Saviour is coming—that he will be born in our midst in this poverty shamed hovel which is India. I shall wait to hear the divine message of civilisation which he will bring with him, the supreme word of promise that he will speak unto man from this very eastern horizon to give faith and strength to all who hear. As I look round I see the crumbling ruins of a proud civilisation strewn like a vast heap of futility. And yet I shall not commit the grievous sin of losing faith in Man. I would rather look forward to the opening of a new chapter in his history after the cataclysm is over and the atmosphere rendered clean with the spirit of service and sacrifice. Perhaps that dawn will come from this horizon, from the East where the sun rises."*[2]
>
> —*RABINDRANATH TAGORE*

COMMUNICATION of modern ideas to our villages is intimately linked with the success of our development plans. The sloth and ignorance of our rural population is proverbial. Illiteracy and poverty have been the chief factors contributing to an attitude of utter apathy among our village brethren. But they have been roused, the encrustation is being removed. One of the contributing factors are the schemes for land and tenurial reforms. The organisation of Village Panchayats and Community Projects are also making their contribution to the process. This process has to be quickened. To the extent the villager becomes aware of development works in other parts of the country, and an integrated picture of India of the day is presented to him and imbibed by him, to that extent his interest in the development activities of his own village would be roused and his apathy shaken. And the Radio today is the medium through which the villager almost overnight is brought in touch with the vast world outside.

Importance Of The Radio

The importance of the medium of the Radio to the cause of communication of modern ideas to our villages thus acquires special significance. Very rightly, therefore, the All India Radio has taken as its major objective the placing of community radio sets in village centres and the most important programmes are addressed to them. Compared to the vastness of the task, the success thus far achieved may not appear very impressive, and thousands of villages may yet be remaining untouched. Compared, however, with the state of affairs obtaining in pre-Independence years, the successes thus far registered by the All India Radio in the direction of extending and encouraging community listening deserve commendation.

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[1] For the information on community listening in this Chapter, we are indebted to Shri Jagdish Chandra Mathur, Director-General, All India Radio, who very kindly sent us a note on the subject.

[2] From essay on 'Crisis in Civilisation'.

Expansion Of Community Listening In India

The development of community listening was taken up almost simultaneously with that of broadcasting in India. A beginning was made as early as 1936, but in subsequent years, while broadcasting facilities expanded, development of community listening was ignored. In 1954 it was estimated that though there were about 29,000 villages having a population of between 1,000—5,000 which were covered by the medium wave transmitters of AIR installed upto that time, the number of rural community sets installed and functioning upto the time was only 9,000. With the progressive implementation of the projects of All India Radio's Five-Year Plan for broadcasting, the number of villages falling within medium wave broadcast coverage has been increasing considerably.

At present, there are about 13,274 community listening centres in the country. By commmunity listening centres are meant centres equipped with Radio sets installed and maintained by Government or by public bodies like municipalities, Panchayats, etc., where the public can gather and listen to broadcasts in groups. Of the 13,274 community listening centres, about, 11,500 are located in rural areas, about 1,560 in urban areas and the remaining in industrial areas. The State-wise distribution of the community sets as on December 31, 1955, is given below :

STATE	No. of Community Sets.
Andhra	1,492
Assam	147
Bihar	254
Bombay	1,144
Saurashtra and Kutch	171
Central Circle	769
Delhi	75
Hyderabad	449
Madras	2,757
Mysore	445
Travancore-Cochin	319

Coorg	4
Orissa	183
Punjab	826
Rajasthan	530
Uttar Pradesh	2,614
West Bengal	1,095
	13,274

The Administrative Aspect

Till 1954, the installation and maintenance of community receivers were in charge of and entirely dependent on the State Governments. The purchase of suitable radio receivers and the associated accessories like loudspeakers, batteries, aerial arrangements and its suitable location in a village has, therefore, been done by different States according to their resources. Maintaining these receiving installations in working order which involves the maintenance of technical staff, charging of batteries and their replacement, repairs, etc., is also the responsibility of the State Governments. AIR on its part not only provided an adequate rural broadcasting service but also has been assisting the States with technical advice in the matter of purchase, installation and maintenance of community sets. But in spite of the great desire on the part of State Government to instal and operate as many radio receiver installations in the villages as possible, they had not been able to make satisfactory progress for want of adequate funds. It was soon evident that a rapid expansion of community listening would not be possible without a subsidy from the Centre. Accordingly, AIR submitted a scheme to the Planning Commission for the grant of a subsidy to State Governments for this purpose. The scheme envisaged a central purchase of a large number of receivers partly paid by the Central Government and partly by State Government. At the end of the Second Five-Year Plan, it is expected that the total number of villages in India which will be provided with community listening facilities would be in the neighbourhood of 1,00,000.

Rural Broadcasts

While the State Governments are responsible for arranging the listening facilities, the responsibility for providing an adequate rural service rests with AIR. All Stations of AIR broadcast rural programmes for the rural population in their respective areas. They are broadcast in 12 Indian languages and half a dozen dialects. They are fixed point broadcasts and are put out immediately after sunset, the time considered most convenient for villagers to gather round the village radio after a day's work. Each broadcast is a composite programme of 45 to 60 minutes duration and is so designed as to provide entertainment, information and education. But care is taken to avoid making the education angle too obvious and every effort is made to communicate to villagers in their idiom. Panchayat type of discussion, interviewing villagers in AIR Studios, spot recordings, etc., are some of the methods of presentation used in establishing rapport. Traditional methods of entertainments are also pressed into service for imparting social education.

Popularity Of Rural Broadcasts

It has been estimated that on the average about 70 persons gather daily round the community sets in the villages to listen to rural broadcasts. This average is based on a sample count made in certain representative areas in the country. Assuming that this average holds good for the country as a whole, about 8 lakhs of persons listen daily on community sets installed in rural areas. It has further been estimated that the daily rural audience is composed of 60 per cent men, 15 per cent women and 25 per cent children. Contrary to expectation, sizable number of women turn up daily to listen to these broadcasts. That these broadcasts are popular is now beyond doubt.

Effectiveness Of The Communication

The audience size for a broadcast is only a partial description of its impact. A more important aspect is the effectiveness of communication, that is, the extent to which these broadcasts register in the minds of those who hear them. This is patently difficult to assess. However, in 1953 AIR undertook a limited enquiry to find out, among other things, whether those who described themselves as having listened regularly to rural programme could recall any items of information communicated through these broadcasts. This pilot survey confirmed the general expectation that only a limited amount of information could be communicated at the village level.

The Canadian Farm Radio Forum Technique

This is a matter which requires serious thought. The AIR maintains a Listener Research Section, and the matter is no doubt receiving its attention, though we are not aware of the lines on which it may be thinking on the question. Recently, however, the AIR, the Government of Bombay, the Tata Institute of Social Sciences and other institutions undertook a project financed by the UNESCO with the object of studying the efficacy of the Farm Radio Forum technique of Canada. The basic idea behind this Canadian technique is that discussion plays an important role in adult education and that unless adults participate in the business of learning, they learn little in the process. The joint project in India comprised an integrated programme modelled on the lines of the Canadian Farm Radio Forum and consisted of (i) a series of specially designed broadcasts, (ii) organisation of rural listening-cum-discussion-cum-action groups in the project area, and (iii) a scientific assessment of the working of the forums and of the effectiveness of the forum technique. The project, we understand, has been completed and the work of assessment remains.

Till we see the assessment report, we cannot say anything on this scheme, its efficacy, etc., but at the very face of it the idea appears to us to be rather far-fetched. The entire agricultural pattern of Canada, a country with a sparse population and sprawling areas, is exactly the opposite of what we have in India of high population densities and scarce land. The problems, as they would be reflected in the general social and economic pattern, would therefore be widely divergent. Nor is the level of the agricultural populations comparable. We have crying illiteracy and ignorance, which is not the case with the Canadian countryside.

Need For A Functional Base Of Rural Broadcasts

The solution for improving and bettering of Radio communication to our rural listeners may well lie elsewhere. We believe that rural Radio broadcasts must have a functional base. For, we have to constantly bear in mind that the perception of communications is not independent of their function for the audience. What the villagers know is what is functional to them. This is a basic aspect deserving the greatest attention, very vital for the success of our rural broadcasts.

Rural Programme Today

Judged from this point of view, where do our rural broadcasts stand today? In almost all rural programmes, news, market prices and weather bulletins are daily broadcast. Folk music and songs, folk story telling, etc., are also common features. Devotional songs and songs of a lighter variety sung by Radio artistes are fairly common. There are special programmes on some week days for women and children. Radio dramas on various themes, ranging from stories of bravery, etc., in days past to comic and other aspects of day to day village life are staged at not very frequent intervals. In between there are interspersed talks and discussions on problems of agricultural technique, e.g., use of better seeds, manure, plant diseases, cattle diseases, crop protection, health and hygiene, cottage industries, etc. Sometimes there may be a talk or a discussion on the Five-Year Plan or Community Projects, etc. A rural development worker or a Block Development Officials is sometimes interviewed.

The above may generally be regarded as the pattern of our rural broadcasts, though it cannot be called exhaustive. The incidence of talks and discussions relating to agricultural and allied matters differs from Station to Station, there being no uniformity in them. The Central Station at Delhi, for example, probably because the requisite talkers are available, is rich in this type of programmes, which may not be the case with some other regional stations, where songs and *bhajans* and folk stories may be far outshadowing the utilitarian type of programmes.

What The Rural Programmes Do Not Tell

One point, however, strikes a listener to these rural programmes. The variety of fares provided by way of folk songs, folk music, etc., are commendable, and a continuous improvement in their quality is noticeable. The same, however, cannot be said of the talks and discussions relating to agricultural or developmental problems. If the rural listener gets very little of it down his consciousness, it is hardly surprising. The talks tend to be the completion of a formality, though sometimes the sheer brilliance of a rural talk is striking. The topic of village sanitation, for example, repeated over and over again by different talkers, with nothing new to say, degenerated into downright boredom. The same may be said about a series of talks regarding successes achieved in the Five-Year Plan. Radio plays related to the working of development plans in villages, interwoven round the village inhabitants with their prejudices and bad and good points are few and far between. Rarely one may hear a Radio feature on the implementation of land reforms in rural areas. Features on the working of Village Panchayats, in their administrative and judicial aspects, are almost conspicuous by their absence.

Absence Of An Integrated Picture

Further, the rural programmes hardly ever convey to the village listener an integrated picture of resurgent India of today, of an expanding economy, of new constructions of the river-valley and the oil refinery or the ship-building type, etc. The poverty of the rural programmes is even more grievous on the political plane. Thus, for example, the immense success of India's foreign policy of peace, our achievements in Korea or Indo-China, are neglected, they being probably considered to be too high politics to be understood by the villager. Again, one of the most basic political education of the day, of inculcating among the rural masses a sense of India's oneness and unity, goes by default.

To seek to explain these defects by saying that the intelligence of the rural listener is too low to understand these 'complicated' issues would be a specious plea not standing on firm ground. First of all, our villagers, undoubtedly backward and illiterate, should and must not be considered as devoid of intelligence. And then it is our task to develop a type of technique and method by which even complicated but nevertheless important issues that face the nation are brought to the consciousness of even the most backward listener.

The Problem Of Personnel: Essential Requisites

These defects are ultimately to be traced to the personnel responsible for putting through the programmes, not the team of Radio employees who sit in the broadcasting room and put through the programmes, but those at higher levels, the programme officers and the like. And even among these programme officers, there is a lower rung and a higher rung, and it is the higher one who ultimately plans, the lower ones only executing what is decided at these higher levels.

The problem of personnel thus becomes all important. And what should be the essential requisites of a person who plans Radio programmes? Over and above all he must be a person imbued with patriotism and with a sense of India's high destiny. He must be a politically conscious man well aware of our Five-Year Plan and our firm resolve to march peacefully to a socialist pattern of sicety. He must know what our democratic Constitution guarantees and what it directs. He should be conscious of the great experiment in democracy which we have launched in India. For a fuller comprehension of this aspect, he must have a knowledge of India's unique struggle for Independence, with its distinctive feature of non-violence and the emphasis on correct means for the achievement of desirable ends. Such a consciousness will make him better appreciate our schemes of land reforms and Village Panchayats. And deeper the understanding of this higher programme personnel, the richer and simpler would be the Radio programmes and consequently more positive and real the contribution of the Radio to the crying needs of India's quick development.

The Experiment With "Producers Of The Hindi Spoken Word"

Judged by these standards, the higher programme producer would be found wanting in many respects. And while the regula Radio-career official, who, after all is said, has shown a commendable attitude to learn and adjust and improve, was getting into stride, and things may have improved, the AIR suddenly decided to experiment with a variety of programme producers who were given the grandiloquent title of "Producers of the Hindi spoken word" (we are not aware if similar 'Producers' have been provided for the 'non-Hindi spoken word'). Apart from the ludicrousness of the title—for how can a mere man arrogate to himself the authority and the power to produce the "spoken word" of man, which, despite all the advances of science, remains the sole prerogative of Nature—this probably was an attempt to satisfy the rather vocal Hindi literary world, whose protests against the 'neglect' of Hindi by the AIR had almost reached the crescendo.

Howsoever it be, it proved an unhappy experiment. Some gentlemen of the Hindi literary world, with hardly any knowledge of Radio production and technique, were superimposed over the Radio-career Officer, rich in experience of production technique, who was decidely taking the turn for the better under the conditions of new India. His enthusiasm was damped and his initiative ebbed. As "Producers of the Hindi spoken word" were brought Hindi litterateurs in their late forties and even late fifties. A book or two or even more of poems, stories or novels was considered sufficient qualification. Even the frankly anti-national activities of some of these old-timers in pre-Independence days was ignored. Almost at the end of their creative activity, decadent, and heavy with age, unaware of the urges and changes in New India, these brought with them to the world of Radio all the smallness and pettiness that has been the crying feature of the stagnant world of Hindi during the last decade and more. For, with honourable exceptions, and apart from some giants, the Hindi litterateurs, by and large, have given an exhibition of themselves which beggars description. A case in point is the unsolvable crisis, born of petty jealousies and unseemly greed, in which the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan has been caught during the last seven years. Litterateurs calling other names and glorifying themselves, seeking to become 'immortal' in their very lifetime on the basis of a writing or two or more—the *modus operandi* being to let themselves be so 'immortalised' through inspired reviews in Hindi journals—these constituted the older and the decadent generation in Hindi, and it is, indeed, surprising why they were considered fit enough for the Radio. Who said that people in their late forties and fifties should be recruited in Government Jobs? And if exceptions are permitted by rules or by Ministerial discretion, why should they be so frequent?

The "Producers" Lack Patriotism

What is needed is a refreshing approach, imbued with an awareness of growing India, growing, apart from the cities, in the villages. The programme officer needs, above all, patriotism. In the case of the "Producers of the Hindi spoken word," there have been instances when innocent references to the names of such hallowed martyrs of India's Battle for Freedom as Bhagat Singh and Chandra Shekhar Azad were deleted from scripts. The "Producers" could do it with impunity. The specious plea was that they want to preserve their *Naukri* (service) and not be deprived of it. Such is their sense of patriotism and respect for martyrs! We consider this performance as reprehensible and shameful. When these 'litterateurs' were busy hewing out a 'career,' these hallowed martyrs preferred the gallows. The least we can do is to respect their memory. And the least that the Government of free India can do is to summarily dismiss such fossilised minds. Some among these have been of the *Jee-Huzoor* type, a trait from olden times, and are well-versed in the art of ingratiating themselves with the topmost ones by regular *Salam* visits and flattery. And feeling on firm ground by virtue of these exercises, they feel confident of themselves even while defying the great AIR tradition of uniform and winning courtesy.

The argument need not be prolonged. It is patent that the experiment with the "Producers of the Hindi spoken word" in their late forties and fifties has been a costly failure. Rethinking and reappraisal is necessary. The earlier they are got rid of, the better for the AIR. The Radio is what may be called a Public Relations Organisation. Through contacts with Radio men the masses of people form their opinion about the state of affairs as relating to the administration. Here are needed fresh and healthy minds and not introverts, schemers and *sifarish* and *naukri-wallas*. The Radio recruits from the younger generation of Hindi, as programme producers and officers, have given a better account of themselves than the decadent ones of the older class.

The Untapped Talent

We would again emphasise that the Radio producer has to be a political type. It may well be worth while to start a Social and Political Section in the AIR with a view to attune the Radio programmes to the social and political requirements of the type of socialist society India aims to build. There is no dearth of talent. The talent, in fact, is very much there in the Radio-career officer. He has to be encouraged, not buttressed with too many 'Dos' and 'Donts', and politically equipped through a programme of training. And then there is the vast untapped talent lying in the villages in order to make rural programmes go down the most doleful villager. Village wits brought in the rural programmes are simply delightful. By way of an example may be pointed out 'Chaudhry Sahab' and 'Panditjee' of Delhi Station's rural broadcasts. Another is the case of a delightful old village *Tai*, whose manner of speech and method of explanation can carry home any point to any villager in the Hariana tract. More such have to be found.

Need For Re-thinking On Rural Broadcasts

The role of Radio in the development of Panchayats cannot be overemphasised. To the simple villager, when he listens, sitting in his village, a person speaking somewhere miles and miles away, he gets the biggest thrill of his life. His perception of the Communication is necessarily sharpened. If what he hears is related to his functions in the village, his daily life, he imbibes what he hears. That underlines the functional base of rural broadcasts. This functional base has of necessity to be intertwined with other aspects, political, economic and developmental, to which we have already referred.

What is essential is a sharp and quick turn in our rural programmes. The present Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Dr. B. V. Keskar, will be remembered for many of the innovations he has introduced in the AIR, e.g., the revival of classical music, the work for the unity of India's great languages, etc. The rural programmes need his special attention. A beginning may be made by calling a Conference of all Station Directors to discuss the question of rural broadcasts. The Panchayat bodies, like the Bihar Panchayat Parishad or the Saurashtra Madhyastha Mandal may also be consulted. A little attention to the question, and freeing it from the unhealthy influences and encorachments of "Producers of the Hindi spoken word" will have very beneficial effects.

CHAPTER XLVII

PANCHAYAT FUNCTIONS

"The sacred occasion for the onward march of our villages lying backward for hundreds of years has now commenced. The Gram Panchayat is at the root of our concept of a new society. It is the root of our Constitution. The Panchayat is the synthesis of all the forces of the village and must be kept free from casteism, partiality, factions and divisions, jealousy, recriminations and mutual quarrels. The Panchayat is not the handmaiden of the Sarpanch or the Panches but is the expression of the will of the inhabitants of the village. The Panches are purified by putting on their forehead the soil on the feet of the people. They have to be free from differences of caste and religion. They represent the divine power of the people." [1]

—U. N. DHEBAR

"In a democratic country, it is only through democratic discipline and the cultivation of a proper sense of civic responsibility that the structure and fabric of peace can be maintained in its proper dignity. No government by itself, especially if it is a democratic government, can maintain order against the wishes or without the active cooperaton of the people. We are working for the achievement of a social objective. We have decided to establish in our country a society on a socialist pattern in which all citizens will be equal. Such a society contemplates not only an equal sharing in the advantages and the bounties which the resources of the country can endow but also a partnership in the performance of other duties which are precedent and essential for the enjoyment of those privileges. So, we have tried to relieve the citizen to the extent we could of any fetters which were binding him...We expect a greater and higher sense of duty to develop in him in consequence of this step taken by us." [2]

—GOVIND BALLABH PANT

"In the fully organized India of a century hence, as in the England of tomorrow, it may well be that it may be these, or some analogous bodies, that will be found exercising actually the larger part of all the functions of government, expending the larger part of that share of the people's income which is administered collectively, appointing and controlling the majority of all the salaried servants of the community, and even enacting, in the aggregate, in their bylaws and regulations, a greater volume of the laws that the people obey." [3]

—SIDNEY WEBB

IN Book Two, in the different State Chapters, we have enumerated the obligatory and discretionary functions of Panchayats in different States. For certain States we have made the list absolutely exhaustive just to illustrate the exact position. On perusing these lists, one might remark that there is hardly any job under the canopy of heaven which the Panchayats are not required to do. Shriman Narayan, in his book *Gandhian Constitution for Free India*, to which Gandhiji wrote a foreward, has given an exhaustive list of Panchayat functions which we have reproduced in Chapter Nine (ante. pp. 246-248). Again, the decisions of the Panchayat Committee of the Simla Conference of Local Self-Government Ministers in June 1954 in regard to various aspects of Panchayat functions have been detailed by us in Chapter Ten (ante. pp. 278-283). We do not propose here to discuss these various functions. We would be more concerned with the general approach to the question and would like to emphasise certain specific aspects.

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[1] From speech at inauguration of Panchayat Bhavan at Jhotwara, Rajasthan on June 11, 1955 (**Rashtradoot**, Hindi daily from Jaipur, dated June 13, 1955).

[2] From Speech in Lok Sabha on April 12, 1956.

[3] From Preface to John Mathai's **Village Government in British India**, Op. cit.

Why The Multiplicity Of Functions

The multiplicity of functions of Panchayats of the municipal and administrative type should not cause any surprise. Let us be clear about the approach. The Village Panchayat is sought to be made the organ of village self-rule. Naturally, therefore, all functions related to such self-rule have to devolve upon it. In days of yore, when our villages had not degenerated and decayed, most of these functions were automatically performed by the village community. The community sense was developed and the civic sense was rich. The village communities then successfully undertook the communal management of the school and the shrine, the relief of sickness and suffering, sanitation and poor relief, public works and public service, protection of life and property and settlement of disputes. Through long practice these jobs had become part and parcel of village life itself, and there was no need for adequate legislations and the like we witness today.

Democracy Should Be A Consistent Structure

If legislations have been undertaken today, if functions are devolved on the village body statutorily, it is because of the needs of the situation. The major part of the people would judge a local institution by the efficiency with which it operates, and if self-government is the road to that efficiency, it should certainly be applied to those spheres which directly touch the daily interests of popular life and its real welfare. Moreover, village self-rule is the best method we have for imparting training in democracy to the rural masses who cannot take part in the provincial or the central government except through their few representatives. We take the liberty to quote the following observation of Dr. Radha Kumud Mookerji from his Proem to this work : "Free India cannot be fully built up as a Republic unless its working is felt in all the strata of society from top to bottom, and especially in the foundation of Indian social structure in the village where should grow the roots of self-government. Democracy must be a consistent structure of

which any section taken anywhere should exhibit the same feature
of self-government. And, indeed, if I may go a little further, th
more backward an area or a community, the greater is its need o
self-government as the most potent force of its uplift. It is libert
alone that fits a people for liberty, and good government is n
substitute for self-government . . . . . Fitness would come out o
the exercises in self-government so as to develop in them the socia
tissues which sustain civic life."

No Curbing Of Panchayat Functions: They Must Have Opportunities For Full Play

It follows, therefore, that the Panchayat functions have to be s
designed as to enable "exercises in self-government" by th
Panchayats in order that "social tissues which sustain civic life
may develop. This aspect is basic and primary. It, therefore, i
purposeless to go into detailed discussions on whether a particula
set or type of functions be given to the Panchayats or not. The ver
purpose of creating them is to give them the opportunities for fu
play in the life of the village community. There is no need to b
worried about the mistakes they may commit. Mistakes, in fac
have to be committed in order that they may learn from the exper
ence. What is to be guarded against is not the devolution o
functions on Panchayats but, on the contrary, any and all tendencie
to put a break on such devolution. More than one Minister at th
meeting of the Central Council of Local Self-Government Minister
at Simla in June 1955 expressed concern at the tendency to curb th
authority of the local bodies. Chaudhry Brahm Prakash, L.S.G
Minister for Delhi State, appeared to be particularly sore on th
point. He said : "I cannot help saying that a clear tendency i
visible in the State Governments as well as in the Centre to take u
on themselves greater and greater share of responsibility and depriv
the lower body of those responsibilities. . . . . I must say that th
is a tendency which is injurious for the development of loc
initiative and development of Panchayats and other local bodies.
will say let us have faith among those whom we ask to vote. Onc
we have conferred the right of vote upon the common man, l
us have respect for it and let us have faith among those who a
elected."

Another Minister, Shri Bhola Paswan of Bihar, also took th
opportunity "to voice the feeling which has been growing amon
many of us for a very long time." He was worried about "th
growing tendency towards increased centralisation." He continue
"But I must state that there is a very strong opinion in the count
which believes in accordance with Gandhiji's principles that w
must have a decentralised system of administration." He plead

that the administration, the topmost levels, must be clear on the question of centralisation versus decentralisation. He added: "I must plead that we must put the greatest faith in the villager. Let us not think that we who are Minisers are very able and competent. Let us first be clear whether we actually believe in development of Village Panchayats or not .... We must trust the common man. It is ultimately he who would deliver the goods." [1]

The two Ministers did not specify the causes leading to their apprehensions, but their sentiments are unexceptionable. All tendencies to curb the functions and powers of the Panchayats should be avoided. On the contrary, the attempt should be to confer on them greater and greater powers to function in different fields, consistent, of course, with their capacity to shoulder the burdens and the responsibilities.

Sanitation—The Foremost Point In Gandhiji's Village Programme

In perusing Mahatma Gandhi's writings on Panchayats we have asked ourselves the question: Which particular Panchayat function he would have liked to place foremost? The answer is easily found. It is village sanitation. Village sanitation remained a passion with the Father of the Nation all his life. He was deeply conscious of its far-reaching aspects. He knew the village inside out and his instructions on the question are amazingly thorough and detailed. Thus, for example, as early as 1919, he wrote in *Young India* [2]: "Mr. Lionel Curtis' description of an Indian village as a collection of insanitary dwellings constructed in a dunghill is not much exaggerated. In fact more pathetic details could be added to those given by him. There should be some system about the structure of well-ordered village, there should be some order about the village lanes, and the roads should be so scrupulously clean, in this land of crores of barefooted pedestrians, that nobody need hesitate in walking or even sleeping in the streets. The lanes should be macadamized and have gutters for letting out water. The temples and mosques should be kept so beautifully clean, that the visitors should feel an air of tranquil holiness about them. The village should, as far as possible, be full of shady trees and fruit trees in and about them. It should have a *dharamshala*, a school and a small dispensary. Washing and privy arrangements should be such as may not contaminate the air, water and roads of the village. There was a time when the Indian village satisfied most of these conditions."

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[1] See a Report of the Simla Meeting of the Central Council of Local Self-Government in **A.I.C.C. Economic Review**, Vol. VII, No. 5, Whole No. 126, of July 1, 1956.

[2] **Tendulkar's Mahatma, Vol. I, p. 327.**

"A Gloriously Interesting And Instructive Service"

In his writings, Gandhiji reverted again and again to the question. And a specially illuminating article by him is found in *Harijan* of February 1935. This was the time when Gandhiji had started the All India Village Industries Association and was giving special attention to village problems. *Harijan* during these days, in fact, became a practical guide for village reconstruction. On January 25, 1935, he began a series entitled "How to Begin" in the *Harijan*. In the third article of the series he wrote at length on village sanitation and hygiene. He castigated the villagers for their insanitary habits and described the deplorable state of village sanitation in the following words: "Members of a family will keep their own house clean, but they will not be interested in the neighbour's. They will keep their courtyard clean of dirt, insects and reptiles, but will not hesitate to shove all into the neighbour's yard. As a result of this want of corporate responsibility, our villages are dung-heaps. Though we are an unshod nation, we so dirty our streets and roads that for a sensitive person it is painful to walk along them bare-foot. It is difficult to get clean drinkable water in village wells, tanks and streams. The approaches to an ordinary village are heaped with muck and rubbish."

Gandhiji then detailed the requirements of "a gloriously interesting and instructive service, fraught with an incalculable benefit to the suffering humanity of India". This service was detailed as follows : "Lanes and streets have to be cleansed of all the rubbish, which should be classified. There are portions which can be turned into manure, portions which have simply to be buried and portions which can be directly turned into wealth. Every bone picked up is valuable raw material from which useful articles can be made or which can be crushed into rich manure. Rags and waste-paper can be turned into paper, and excreta picked up are golden manure for the village fields. The way to treat the excreta is to mix them, liquid as well as solid, with superficial earth in soil dug not deeper than one foot at the most. The way to do it is either to have latrines, with earthen or iron buckets, and empty the contents in properly prepared places from day to day, or to perform the functions directly on the ground dug up in squares. The excreta can either be buried in a village common or in individual fields. At present, this rich manure, valued at lakhs of rupees, runs to waste every day, fouls the air and brings disease into the bargain.

"The village tanks are promiscuously used for bathing, washing clothes and drinking and cooking purposes. Many village tanks are also used by cattle. Buffaloes are often to be seen wallowing in them. The wonder is that in spite of this sinful misuse of the village tanks, villages have not been destroyed by epidemics. It is the universal medical evidence that this neglect to ensure the purity of the water-supply of villages is responsible for many of the diseases suffered by the villagers."

Village Sanitation In *Constructive Programme*

In December 1941 Gandhiji published his 25-page booklet, the famous *Constructive Programme*. This he characterised as an original contribution on "its meaning and place", for the achievement of "non-violent independence." The sixth item in this thirteen-point Constructive Programme dealt with 'Village Sanitation.' Under this item Gandhiji wrote : "Divorce between intelligence and labour has resulted in criminal negligence of the villages. And so, instead of having graceful hamlets dotting the land, we have dung-heaps. The approach to many villages is not a refreshing experience. Often one would like to shut one's eyes and stuff one's nose, such is the surrounding dirt and offending smell. If the majority of Congressmen are derived from our villages as they should be, they should be able to make our villages models of cleanliness in every sense of the word. But they have never considered it their duty to identify themselves with the villagers in their daily lives. A sense of national or social sanitation is not a virtue among us. We may take a kind of bath, but we do not mind dirtying the well or tank or river by whose side or in which we perform ablutions. I regard this defect as a great vice which is responsible for the disgraceful state of our villages and the sacred banks of the sacred rivers and for the diseases that spring from insanitation."

In a letter to a correspondent, dated Bardoli, 4-6-31 [1], Gandhiji laid down the following points about village cleanliness :

(i) It is the duty of the State to keep the villages clean.

(ii) If the State does not do it, the village inhabitants must do so.

(iii) Village municipality is really a Village Service League. The villagers themselves can create such a body.

(iv) Village cleanliness can be brought about free of cost if there are volunteers.

(v) In small villages even three or four public minded young men can undertake the work.

In village sanitation and cleanliness Gandhiji saw the regeneration of India, and his passionate emphasis on the subject has to be viewed in this light. And under the existing state of affairs in relation to Panchayats, while there may be difficulties in the way of other functions devolving on them, there can be none on the question of village sanitation. No expenditure is involved. All that the Panchayat is required to do is to rouse village spirit.

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[1] This letter is published in **Arthik-Sameeksha**, Vol. IV, No. 11-12, Whole No. 77-78, dated March 25, 1955; Special Sarvodaya Issue.

The *Vatika-Grih* Scheme

Talking of village sanitation, attention may be drawn to a scheme of Shri Purshottam Das Tandon, which has been put into practice in some villages of Uttar Pradesh. It is called the *Vatika-Grih* scheme. Under this scheme every house in the village should have a small plot of land attached to it where some vegetables and other plants may be grown and the peasants' cattle lodged. This small plot can also serve as the dumping ground for family refuse, dirt and dust, adding to its fertility. Shri Tandonjee has suggested that half an acre may thus be allotted to each household. Such a development will undoubtedly beautify the village and will be conducive to village health.

Revenue Collection By Panchayats

The next group of functions for the Village Panchayats, to which we would attach special importance would be what may be called revenue functions. This is a question over which indecision has existed all these years. The Panchayat Committee of the L.S.G. Ministers Conference at Simla in June 1954 had clearly favoured the view that Panchayats should be made the agency for collection of land revenue on behalf of the Government in lieu of which they should be entitled to a certain percentage of the collections. We have already expressed ourselves on the question of the increased income of the Government from land revenue in the Chapter on 'Panchayat Finances'. We would like it to be made available to the Panchayats. What has appeared to us as surprising is the resistance of the State Governments to entrust the task of revenue collection to Panchayats. Very few States have provided for it. There is considerable reluctance to give them revenue responsibilities and associate them with the maintenance of land records and the implementation of land reform measures.

This reluctance perhaps arises from the fact that many of the Panchayats are divided by factions, or are not truly representative of the village, or are inexperienced and inefficient. All this is true, and if as a result an attitude of cautious approach, of slow devolution of such responsibilities is advocated, that is unexceptionable. We feel, however, that apart from this desirable caution, the full implications of the evolving land pattern is not imbibed and the ultimate objective is not borne in mind. Let there be no mistake and confusion about it. In our future pattern, the Panchayat and the Panchayat alone will have to be responsible for all land and revenue matters relating to the village. Too long have petty revenue officials and others of the revenue administration played havoc with our villages, village records, etc. In the future pattern the village *patwari* or *patel*, or by whatever name he is called, will have to be subservient to the Panchayat. The Panchayats must be made fully responsible for the maintenance of village records, the *patwari* acting as its clerk. Thus alone the most unscrupulous and heartless tampering of village papers can be prevented. Further, the Panchayat alone will be the agency for the collection of land revenue. Furthermore, the Panchayats will have the powers for the management of government lands of common utility such as waste lands, pasture lands, fisheries, abadi-sites, forests, etc. All letting and subletting of land will have to be done with the concurrence and approval of Panchayats. In Planning Commission circles, and elsewhere, there has raged a long endless discussion about what has been termed "Land Management." Endless arguments have been advanced for or against certain sets of proposals. Probably the labours and exercises were not so necessary. The hesitation in the way of conferring all powers of land and revenue at the village level to the Village Panchayats arises, basically from a lack of faith in the commonsense of our villagers. But let this hesitation be given the go by. Let us go ahead, and let us be prepared for mistakes on the part of Village Panchayats. They will learn through these mistakes.

"No Stinting On The Side Of Transfer Of Functions": Need For A Bold Approach

We have to be very clear in our minds about what we want, what we aim at. Shri U. N. Dhebar has said that "there should be no stinting either on the side of transfer of functions or on the side of resources." In the village only the Village Panchayats can deliver the goods. They represent collective village wisdom. If given revenue powers, powers to maintain village records and powers in land management, they may be expected any day to manage it better than the way the village *patwaris* and other related functionaries have done thus for. The Panchayat management would certainly be more honest.

We do not propose to go into a detailed discussion of specific items of revenue collection, land records maintenance, or land management by the Panchayats. To emphasise that Panchayats do not know this type of work or that, that they do not possess the requisite capacity, etc., is begging the question. We do not have much respect for the performance hitherto of the incumbents of these functions in our administrative set up. Even after abolition of intermediaries there have been spates of ejectments, and those who maintain village records have to be to a large extent thanked for it. Sometimes we ask ourselves as to whether the discussions in the Secretariat ever comprehend the great villain that the village revenue-records-keeper has been, and will continue to be, unless he is curbed and brought under the control of the community. In *Yajnavalkya Smriti* we came across a passage where the village revenue-records-keeper is described as cunning and the king is enjoined to protect the people from his machinations.

And so let there he "no stinting in the transfer of functions". We need to experiment boldly. Of course, in being bold caution and circumspection need not be thrown to the winds. That no administration can afford to do. With caution let there be sympathy. With circumspection, let there be a burning urge to train our Panchayats in the arts of these functions. But let the authority and the power in revenue, land records and land management matters be given to the Panchayats.

Panchayats And Co-operatives

A third question relates to the question of the development of cooperatives in the villages and the relationship of Panchayats with them. If we may say so, the entire State attitude to cooperatives today is in a state of flux. The decision to build up a socialist society, and the preponderance of uneconomic holdings have been the compelling urges forcing us more and more to view cooperation in all spheres, and specially cooperative farming as the way out. In fact, there is hardly any doubt anywhere about the ultimate objective, the only discordant note being from Uttar Pradesh, where the State Government, according to a recent report, set its face against cooperative farming and considers individual peasant cultivation to be more suitable. The Second Five-Year Plan has visualised a large expansion of cooperatives, and in his inaugural address at the second conference of State Ministers for Cooperation at Mussoorie on July 1, 1956, Union Food Minister, Shri Ajit Prasad Jain, pleaded for it passionately. Shri Jain very rightly observed: "The country had adopted the goal of socialist society. The structure of socio-economic relation and the pattern of development had to be so planned that they resulted not only in appreciable increase in national income and employment but also greater equality in incomes and wealth." Addressing the conference on July 2nd, Union Planning Minister, Shri G. L. Nanda, said that "Cooperation was an article of faith on which the Second Plan was based." He emphasised that "A socialist pattern of society and a welfare state were unthinkable without cooperation."

We have at present about 300 cooperative farms in the country in varying degrees of development, an infinitesimal percentage among which are generally regarded as really successful. Most of these have been State-sponsored or assisted. It is apparent, however, that our coat-and-necktied Cooperative Officers, the army of the high paid Cooperative Registrars and the rest of them, have generally attempted to plan and organise cooperative farming in the serenity of their office rooms and the rectangles of their tables, the touch with the people, learning from the people and getting experience in the course of actual effort being few and far between. Here, as elsewhere, one's own lack of effort and capacity is with easy facility attributed to the 'individualistic' peasant, his 'conservatism', etc., etc.

We, however, feel that in India we have yet to make a beginning in cooperative farming. An Official Delegation is shortly leave for the People's Republic of China to study the amazing growth of the movement there. The study will be full of lessons for us in India. Li Fu-chun, Vice-Premier of China and Chairman of State Planning Commission, in his "Report on the First Five-Year Plan for Development of the National Economy of the People's Republic of China in 1953-1957", delivered on July 5 and 6, 1955, at the Second Session of the First National People's Congress, referring to the question of cooperation in agriculture, said : "We must hold firmly to the principle of voluntariness and mutual benefit on the part of the masses, prevent and correct cases of coercion and commandism and any actions which go against the interests of the middle peasants; we must satisfactorily solve the various problems which arise within the cooperative such as calculation of labour contributed, remuneration for land and other pooled means of production, finding funds for production and the determination of the ratio of reserve funds in relation to other items."

We are confident that the study of China's agrarian cooperatives will help the evolution of our own pattern, and the relationship of Panchayats with them can only then be firmly placed. It is, however, clear that the two functions, at least for the present, must be kept separate, but the closest cooperation between the two will have to be maintained. This method has been tried in some successful cooperative farms in Delhi State, and is working very well. In the development of cooperation, the initial spade work by the Panchayats would be of the interest and importance. That will create the ground and the atmosphere when the experiment in cooperation will succeed.

CHAPTER XLVIII

CONCLUSION

"We want freedom for our country, but not at the expense or exploitation of others, not so as to degrade other countries. I do not want the freedom of India if it means the extinction of England or the disappearance of Englishmen. I want the freedom of my country so that other countries may learn something from my free country, so that the resources of my country might be utilised for the benefit of mankind....My love, therefore, of nationalism, or my idea of nationalism is that my country may become free, that if need be, the whole country may die, so that the human race may live. There is no room for race-hatred there. Let that be our nationalism."

—*MAHATMA GANDHI*

"Where the mind is without fear
And the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by
narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the
dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening
thought and action;
Into that heaven of freedom, my father,
Let my country awake."

—*RABINDRANATH TAGORE*

MAHATMA Gandhi once offered to the world a talisman. It was as follows :

"I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to *him*. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to Swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions?

"Then you will find your doubt and your self melting away." Gandhiji saw these weakest and poorest faces, in their millions, in the sprawling villages of India, from Gujarat to Assam, from Kashmir to Cape Comorin. He saw them as no one did. He sat into them, became one with them, then emerged from among them and rose to all the heights those humble hamlet-dwellers are capable of rising, and more.

Nehru also met them, in their utter degradation and misery, sat into their sad eyes and was haunted by them. He became 'peasant-conditioned,' and was 'bowled over' completely by Gandhiji who arose from among those haunted looks. This impact moulded him, he became a traveller into the minds and hearts of the Indian people, and was led on to a Discovery of India. And he became their greatest champion.

Such is the Indian peasant. From immemorial times he has lived in India's villages. He lived a happy contented life. His genius had created the Village Panchayat institution. He had enough to eat, was happy, prosperous and highly cultured. But then he went down. Few human dramas in world history would be as tragic and heart-rending as the tragedy of the Indian peasant. The tortures and the afflictions he went through, the fires of starvation through which he passed and was consumed, the deaths by the millions—these cannot be computed.

But he persisted, he continued to live in the same old villages which had degenerated into dung-hills. And he is there today as well steeped in unfathomable, immeasureable, intolerable, indescribable, heart-rending poverty. You find him everywhere, in the far away plantations of Assam, the South, in Travancore-Cochin, in Gujarat, in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar—everywhere. But behind those sad eyes, and below those outer encrustations lies wisdom and intelligence and great humility. He is revealed when you go to his humble cottage. His hospitality in his poverty opens him out before you.

There are other points of contact. There is the city of Allahabad, Nehru's birthplace. Here the Ganges and the Jamuna meet. The confluence is famous as Sangam. You visit the place of a quiet evening. It is calm and serenity all round. There is peace and tranquillity. All things appear in harmony. And to this place the peasant comes. He comes there in his millions. He has been coming there like that since thousands of years. Tradition relates it to the famous churning of the sea by the *Devas* and *Asurs* and the consequent quarrel for the *Amrit-Kalash* (pot containing the elixir of life), which may be said to correspond to the period of the late Aryan-Dravidian wars.

To this city he has been coming since immemorial times. And when you see him in his millions year by year, you wonder at this faith which has persisted for centuries upon centuries. You see them, old and young, men, women and children, with their knapsacks on their backs, in all the simplicity of their faith, with all their goodness and piety, and they possess you. Who are these people? From where do they come? Why they come?

The present has been an attempt to find answers to these questions. We have seen what he was, what he became and what he is today. The question is : What is his destiny tomorrow?

The past influences the present, and then the Indian peasants' is no ordinary past. In this past, through her village order, India distributed leadership all over the country. Villagers were India's schools of living. This village society was possessed of knowledge, material and moral, contributing towards life, and every individual had the opportunity and guidance to attain fulfilment through devoted work creating wealth for common good. India, it is said, then flowed in milk and honey. She attained ennobling heights of glory in art, literature and architecture. Her's was the message of peace. She attracted people from far and near.

The roots of this India were in the Indian village communities with their timeless base. The basic principles of the village communities were self-help, respect for others' rights, equal rights in land and village civic life, and service before self. But a time came when the leadership that resided in the village, and circulated like life-blood through the entire body of the nation, drifted away from there leaving disorder, disuse and poverty in its trail.

Then occurred a profound event in India's life. The Congress was born and grew up. What was the Congress? In his Presidential Address to the Avadi Congress, Shri Dhebar has answered the question thus : "It was a tear fallen from the suffering and agonised hearts of humanity in bondage come to life.... That tear was destined to become a stream, the stream a river, and the river a mighty Ganges and Brahmaputra, which was to wash off the sins and weaknesses of ages, to weld her people together, breathe new life and new spirit into their hearts and carry them aloft, united, purified and strengthened to their cherished goal. It was to be a force unparallelled in the history of the world."

Gandhiji forged the Congress into a mighty weapon and the Indian people moved forward. The march of India's millions coincided with the march of world humanity for a juster order and social system. Forces of world reaction were arrayed against the new resurgent forces. The reactionary citadel cracked irretrievably in Russia. The cracks continued. Though baffled oft, the struggles of the resurgent masses continued. It continued to win significant victories. And the end of World War II saw the emergence of new India, new China, new Burma, new Indo-China, of new Asia. It was, in fact, the Asian peasantry on the move. The Indian peasants were not alone in their struggle and suffering. They had their Asian brethren with them.

India, however, followed a unique method of her emancipation. It was the path of non-violence and peace. Not that this was an easy path. It was a difficult path, and great obstacles stood in the way. Gandhiji wrote in *Young India* in 1931 : "The greatest obstacle in the path of non-violence is the presence in our midst of the indigenous interests that have sprung up from British rule. the interests of monied men, speculators, scripholders, landholders, factory-owners, and the like. All these do not realise that they are living on the blood of the masses, and when they do, they become as callous as the British principals, whose tools and agents they are." The same year he had said elsewhere: "When the peasant is fully awakened to a sense of his plight and knows that it is not the *kismet* that brought him to the helpless state but the existing rule, unaided, he will in his impatience abolish all distinctions between the constitutional and the unconstitutional, even the violent and non-violent means. The Congress expects to guide the peasants in the right direction."

Under Congress guidance the Indian people won their freedom. The evolution of the National Congress in the past dictated naturally the Avadi Resolution on Socialist Pattern of Society as a logical culmination. And today India is engaged in an effort to build a socialist society by peaceful means. Speaking at Patna on November 2, 1955, Nehru had said: "To uplift the masses is our great task. If we succeed in our mission by following the path of Mahatma Gandhi, its impact would be felt not only in India but also in the whole world, as it would show the world that a nation can go ahead on the path of progress through peaceful means."

This is a high and worthy task, worthy of our ancient land. And if we are to succeed in this task, the Indian peasants will be called upon to play the major part, for nothing major can happen in India without their participation. There are other countries and nations in the world who have set before themselves the task of building up a socialist society. We firmly believe, however, that each country will march towards socialism along its own separate path, in accordance with its genius and tradition, and the specific contribution made by any particular nation will enrich the total world experience and quicken the process. In this there is place for healthy emulation and not unhealthy rivalry.

Viewed in this background, the Village Panchayat experiment in India is pregnant with great meaning and significance for the entire future development of mankind which, of necessity, and out of sheer logic of the situation, has to be towards a socialist order. The Village Panchayats, which will have to be the organs of socialism in the villages, bid fair to become institutions with great potentialities for future advance. Working in an atmosphere of conflicting interests in villages, they seek to prevent violence and help peaceful transition. As decentralised units they will remain a wholesome corrective in our democratic evolution. As the medium for the mobilisation of the community, they will lead the villages on to the path of self-help for development. They will harmonise conflicts through persuasion and goodwill and achieve desired results.

We do not see why conflicts among different village interests should necessarily lead to violence and bloodshed. With two such great and sprawling countries like Russia and China turned socialist, with all countries of Europe east of Berlin engaged in socialistic construction, with Burma committed to and implementing a socialist programme, with Indonesia essentially socialist in her politics, and with Ceylon now following similar policies, the balance of forces is so powerfully tilted in favour of socialism that to talk of violence as a necessary prelude to the creation of a socialist society in India amounts merely to a parrot-like repetition of certain *mantras*.

We are reminded here of a striking speech reported from Peking recently. Mr. Li Wei Han, a Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, reporting to the Congress on June 26, 1956, spoke of changes in the aspects of class struggle and warned against following the errors of old methods. He said : "Education and persuasion had now become the main methods of dealing with the class struggle and class contradictions as the relationship between classes had changed." India would have no objection to accepting this method of dealing with the class struggle. This, in fact, is one of the main points which Prime Minister Nehru and Congress President Dhebar have been repeating since Avadi with regard to the peaceful building up of socialism in India. If Mr. Li Wei Han's formulation is Marxism as applied to China today, and there is no reason to doubt that it can be anything but, it can only be regarded as a higher development of the Marxian philosophy.

What has happened and is happening in India since we achieved Independence gives hope in the prospects of a peaceful progress towards socialism in India. The peaceful change, as distinct from violent and sudden changes, can be only dimly perceived at a given moment, and it will express itself, among other things, in the human material in society, in their attitudes and behaviours. Looked thus, how does human behaviour in society reveal itself today? It is true that you come across insincerity and smallness in your daily existence, and much that is bad and distasteful. It is also true that there are found persons preaching what they never practise, swearing by Gandhiji all the time but forgetting Mahatma Gandhi's sound advice that "Socialism begins with the first convert." There are other disappointments. But this is the one side of the picture. During the freedom struggle and in the post-Independence period, there has been the moulding of leadership imbued with a sense of dedication and service, and it is re-assuring that the new generation is imbibing that spirit.

In an embryonic form this represents a silent peaceful struggle which has set in within the Indian society. Those who are at the helm of affairs have to clearly perceive it and give it a sound direction. It entails many a type of jobs. For one, the socialist urges have to be further clarified and concretised. For another, a dynamic programme of progressive social legislations has to be enacted and enforced. Further, the cadres have to be carefully built up.

Such preparations and trimmings will create all those conditions in which the Village Panchayats in India will play their historic role of building socialism non-violently and peacefully and the village peasant will fulfil his destiny. To humanity marching forward to a cooperative co-existence based upon a just social order, this would be a great contribution. Despite the cold wars that rage on, the collected experience, intelligence and knowledge of mankind, the very development of the productive forces, the entire course of human history, in short, tends towards a consummation wherein humanity will be united for greater and greater conquests over nature. Such a society of necessity will be based on brotherhood and equality, wherein power will reside in communities living cooperatively in their separate units. And yet humanity would be united as never before. It will be a unity of opposites. And so we end where we began. This coming human society will be a revival in a higher form of the liberty, equality and fraternity of the ancient gentes. It would be a spiral-like development, at a higher level. And humanity will march on, the "ceaseless adventure of man" will continue.

The success of the Village Panchayat experiment in India would be a significant contribution to such a consummation of human society.

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GLOSSARY

Abadi : Site of village habitation.
Adhivasi: A class of landholder.
Adhyaksha: President.
Aditya: Sun-God in Hindu mythology.
Ahar: A device for fetching water for irrigation.
Ahir: A lower caste of Hindu cultivators.
A'in : Law.
Akhara: Arena for wrestling.
Amla: A petty revenue official.
Amsam : Term used for village in Malabar district.
Anchal: A territorial division for administrative purposes.
Anikastha: Veterinary Doctor.
Anna: Foodgrain.
Anuvak: Part or chapter of a book.
Apnaswati: Fertile land.
Aranya: Forest.
Artana: A term used for fallow land in Rig Ved.
Asami: An inferior class of landholders.
Ashwachakra: Stone wheel used for drawing water from the well in Vedic period.
Ashapal: Village official to look after 1,000 villages in Shukra's time.
Ashwadamak: Horse-trainer.
Ashwamedh: Horse-sacrifice.
Asur: Devil.
Avatar: Incarnation of God.

Bali: State's share in the produce of land—term used by Manu.
Bandhara: A kind of pipe-system for providing drinkable water in villages.
Baolie: Reservoir of water.
Barga: Crop-sharing system of cultivation.
Bargadar: One who cultivates on crop-share basis.
Bash: Voluntary levy collected by Panchayat from the people in the villages.
Batai: Crop-sharing.
Begar: Unpaid forced labour.
Bhag: State's share in the produce.
Bhagdugha: Collector of State's share from the village people in the produce from land.
Bhaghara: A term used by Shukra for village official to collect land revenue for the State.
Bhaichara: Brotherhood.
Bham: Cess on carcass.
Bhangara: A Punjabi folk-dance.
Bhangi: Sweeper.
Bhatika: Term used for agricultural labour in Budhist period.
Bhoodan: Land-gift.
Biswa: A land measurement equal to one twentieth part of a *bigha*.

Chabutra: A mound constructed specially for sitting.
Chamar: One of the scheduled castes carrying on shoe-making business.
Chandal: A lower caste.
Charkha: Spinning wheel.
Chaupal: Village parlour.
Chowkidar: Watchman.
Chowkidari: A kind of levy collected for watch and ward of the village.
Chhidra-Anveshak: One who is always after finding faults in others.
Chulha: Oven, hearth.

Danda: Punishment.
Danda-Vidhayak: A village officer appointed for punishing the wrong doer in middle ages.
Daroga: Police Inspector.
Dashi: A higher class of village official in ancient India responsible for administration of 10 villages.
Dasyus: Term used in vedas for enslaved people.
Datra: Sickle for reaping the harvest.
Desam: A territorial division for administrative purposes in the South India akin to a village.
Desi: A term used in vedic period to connote local or non-Aryan people.
Deva-Rina: Debt to gods or the forces of nature.
Dharma: Religion.
Dharma-Asan: Seat of Justice or religion.
Dharmapalak: Defender of faith and justice.
Dharmasala: Rest house meant for travellers.
Dharikar: One of the scheduled castes in India.
Dhobi: Washerman.
Dhur: A measure of land smaller than *Biswa*.
Diwani: Civil Court.
Dronmukha: A term used for union of 400 villages, in middle ages.
Farman: A paper containing orders from the State.

Gana: A term used for local bodies in Ancient India.
Ganuja: Member of a *gana*.
Garadiya: Shepherd.
Ghee: Clarified butter.
Ghosh: A type of village in Ramayan Age.
Ghosh-Mahattar: Village official.
Girasdari: An intermediary right.
Gola: Store for preserving grain.
Gopa: Term used by Kautilya for village official.
Gopalak: A man who maintains flocks of cattle.
Gope: A man who maintains cow herds.
Gopal: One who looks after cowherds.
Goonda: Hooligan indulging in unsocial activities.
Gosthi: Meeting.
Govikartan: Huntsman.
Grama: Village.
Grama-Bhojak: Village Headman.
Gram-dwar: Village gate.
Gram-kshetra: Cultivated land around the village.
Gram-kantaka: Trouble-monger indulging in anti-communal activities.
Gramagara: A term used for ordinary village paying usual revenue in Chandragupta's time.
Grampa: Term used by Shukra for special village official to look after Panthshala.
Gramini: Term used by Manu for village official.
Gramyajana: Village watchman.
Gramik: Village official.
Gramani: Village official in Ramayan Age.
Gram-Mahattar: A class of village officials in Ramayan Age.
Gram Samiti: Village Assembly.
Gram Vridha: Village Elders.
Gulma: Police Out-post.
Guru: Teacher.

Haissiyat: Status.
Hallasheri: A system of labour-gift for development work in Kashmir.
Havis: Offering.
Hawala: A system of Land-ownership.
Him-pat: Ice-fall.
Hittal: A kind of cart used in villages.

Ijaredar: An intermediary right in land-ownership.
Ilaqa: A territory.
Indra: Rain-god of Vedic period.

Jagirdari: An intermediary right granted by the British in India to their supporters by way of gift.
Jamgha-Karika: Village courier.
Jan-pad: Term used for republic in Vedic period.
Jan-Shakti: Power of the People.
Jatak: Buddhist texts.
Jati: Caste.
Jee-huzoori: Gross flattery.
Jowar: A small millet.
Jyestha: Biggest village; term used to denote largest village according to population in Chandra Gupta's time.

Kachcha: Raw.
Khanitrima: Term used in Rig Ved for water got by digging.
Kanishtha: Smaller village according to population.
Kanungo: A higher revenue official to look after the preparation and maintenance of land records.
Kara: A tax specially levied on the yield of orchards.
Karnan: A villave revenue officer maintaining village accounts.
Karpasa: Cotton.
Karshan: Act of tilling the land.
Karvatika: Union of 200 villages.
Katni: Sickle.
Kautumbik: Term used for village-folk.
Kaymi-pattadar: Permanent lessee.
Kendra: Centre.
Kharwat: A settlement akin to village in Buddhist period.
Khas Mahal: Land under owners' own cultivation.
Khata: Threshing floor.
Kheta: Term used in Jain texts for village.
Khudkashta: Land under owners' own cultivation.
Kisan: Cultivator.
Kohar: Pot-maker.
Koop-manduk: Lit. Frog of the well. Conditioned by one's own limitations.
Krosha: Measure of distance equal to nearly 2 miles, as used in Buddhist period.
Kshattri: Chamberlain.
Kshetra: Cultivated field.
Kshetra-pati: Lord of fields.
Kshirodan: A kind of pudding prepared by cooking rice mixed with milk.

Kshir-sagar: Ocean of milk supposed to be abode of God Vishnu in Hindu mythology.
Kubha: Term used by Shukra for small villages.
Kudimaramat: Repair of minor irrigation works.
Kula: Local bodies in ancient time.
Kulkarni: Village record-keeper.
Kutcherry: Court.

Lambardars: Headmen of the village community.
Langal: Ploughshare.
Lashkar: Village judicial official in Garo Hills of Assam.
Lathi: Stick.
Lavan: Harvesting.
Lekhpal: Village record-keeper.
Lohar: Black Smith.
Lokranjan: Winning the confidence of the people.

Madhyama: Middling villages classed according to size of population in Chandragupta's time.
Mahamatra: A village official in Buddhist period.
Mahjanpad: Republics in Mahabharat period.
Mahimai: Taxes on carts carrying food grains.
Gram-Sevak: Village level worker.
Khuls: Reservoir of water for irrigation purposes.
Malba: Fund out of which the common expenses of the village communities are met in Punjab.
Mamlatdar: A class of revenue officers.
Mantra: A Vedic hymn.
Mardan: Threshing.
Masur: An inferior kind of food grain.
Mauza: Village.
Mazdoor: Labourer.
Mela: Fair.
Mistries: Masons.
Mukhiya: Village Headman.

Nagar: Small town or city.
Nagarka: Town in Buddhist period.
Nai Taleem: New system of education.
Naukri: Service.
Nayak: Term used by Shukra to denote village official to look after the administration of 10 villages.
Nazrana: An illegal payment.
Nishka: Metallic coin current in Ancient time.

Palagala: The courier.
Palledar: Weighman.
Palash: A kind of tree.
Palli: Term used for village settlement in Jain texts.
Pana: Gold coin current in Kautilya's time.
Panchayat: Village Community.
Panchotra: One fifth share.
Panthshala: Rest house specially meant for travellers.
Panthshaladhipati: Manager of the Rest House.
Para: A section of a village.
Pargana: Sub-division.
Pariharaka: Revenue free village in Chandragupta's time.
Parmeshwar: God Almighty.
Patil or *Patel*: Village record-keeper.
Pattakil: Village Headman.
Patwari: Lowest revenue official who looks after village records.
Phal: Blade or pointed end of the ploughshare.
Pitri-Rina: Debt towards one's parents.
Pradesh: Province.
Pradhan: Headman.
Praja: People.
Pratihar: Peon engaged to summon people when called for by the village official in Shukra's time.
Prithvi: Earth.
Prithvidohan: Milching of the earth.
Proverthy: An administrative unit in Travancore-Cochin.
Puja: Worship.
Pur: Cities of the type found at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa.
Purana: Mythological texts of the Hindus.
Purandar: Conquerors of Purs—a term used by Aryans for their heroes in Vedic period.
Purna Swarajya: Complete Independence.
Purohit: Priest.
Pyau: Place for drinking water.

Rajsuya-Yajna: Sacrificial ritual performed at the time of king's consecration.
Raja-krit: King-maker.
Rajju: Cess payable for settlement.
Raj-patti: Royal fillet.
Rath-kara: Chariot-maker.
Rishi: Sage.
Rishi-Rina: Debt towards teacher.

Ratna-havish: Jewel offering.

Sabha: Assembly.
Sabhya: Civilised.
Sabhyata: Civilization.
Sahasra: One thousand.
Sambhuya: Popular gathering.
Samgrahana: Term used by Kautilya to denote union of 10 villages.
Samajana: An Ancient deity symbol of political conciousness spread evenly among all the members of the community.
Samant: Village official described by Shukra to look after 100 villages.
Samkhyaka: Village accountant as described by Kautilya.
Samuday: Local bodies.
Samay: Laws of the Ganas passed in their meeting.
Sangha: Local body.
Sanjhi: A system of cultivation on crop-share basis prevalent in Punjab.
Sawa-kangni: Inferior millet.
Saptasaindhava: Area bounded by six rivers on both sides of the Indus as described in Vedas.
Sarai: A rest house for travellers.
Sarvausadh: Which can cure all diseases.
Satmana: Gold coin used in later Vedic period.
Seer: Plough-share.
Senani: A military official.
Setu: Reservoir of water.
Shati: Term used by Manu to denote village official responsible for administration of 100 villages.
Shaulkik: Term used by Shukra for the collector of taxes from traders.
Shishya: Disciple.
Shristi: The Universe.
Shramadan: Labour-gift.
Shreni: Corporation.
Shresthin: Mercantile class.
Sifarish: Recommendation.
Sita: Land held by the State.
Sitadhyaksha: Official to look after the cultivation of land held by the State.
Sneh-sammelan: Affection Conference.
Som-Ras: Special drink of Aryans in Vedic period.
Soshit: Exploited.
Sthruja: Organization of 80 villages.
Sthivi: A place for storing grain in Vedic period.
Subah: Province.
Sukta: Ode.
Sufaidposh: White-Collared.
Suta: Charioteer.
Swayamja: Term used for self-flowing water in Rig Vedic period.

Takshan: Carpenter.
Talati: A lower grade of village revenue officer.
Taluka: Sub-division.
Tapasya: Penance.
Tava: Frying pan for cooking bread.
Tirthankar: Order of religious head of the Jainas.
Tola: A portion of a village.
Up-pradhan: Vice-President.
Urad: Small millet.
Urar: An assembly of the village people.
Urdara: A utensil for measuring food grain in Vedic period.
Vajra: Armour of Lord Indra.
Vapan: Sowing.
Varuna: A Vedic deity symbol of water.
Vartani: Road-cess.
Vishanti: A class of village official responsible for administration of 50 villages as mentioned by Manu.
Vivita: Tax levied on pasture in Buddha's time.
Vyayamshala: Place for physical exercises.

Yamik: Term used by Shukra for village watchmen.
Yojan: A measure of distance.
Zilla: District.